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In Pictures

The global game caught on camera

Italy...Lazio players and staff celebrate with their fans after beating Roma in the *Derby della Capitale*

Switzerland...Wales Women line up in a unique manner for a team photo ahead of their World Cup qualifier with Switzerland

Argentina...Boca Juniors fans celebrate during their team's title-winning victory over Independiente

Ecuador...Gabriel Barbosa embraces the Copa Libertadores trophy after hitting the winner for Flamengo in the final in Guayaquil

Uruguay...Luis Suarez breaks down in tears when addressing the Nacional supporters after winning the title at his boyhood club

Italy...Monza fans hold up a message of support for Pablo Mari after the defender was stabbed during an attack in a supermarket: "Come on Pablo we are waiting for you"

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FROM THE ASSISTANT EDITOR

By the time you read this, the World Cup will be underway and all the drama that comes with it will be unfolding. We'll recount the full tale of Qatar 2022 in the next issue, but this month we profile one of the men that could be central to the story, Karim Benzema.

Four years ago, our latest cover star watched on from home as France lifted the trophy. This time around – assuming he doesn't become the latest player to suffer a tournament-ending injury – he will be front and centre of the French campaign, just weeks after being crowned the world's best player at the Ballon d'Or awards.

With all eyes on Qatar, we've also indulged in some World Cup nostalgia in this issue: Chris Evans tells the story of USA v Iran at France '98, Ryan Baldi looks back at how Ronaldo fired Brazil to the trophy four years later, plus we also remember some of the most famous penalty-shootout moments in World Cup history.

> With all eyes on Qatar, we've also indulged in some World Cup nostalgia in this issue

Before the tournament began there were plenty of other trophies handed out across the globe, and we've got reports from the domestic competitions of Argentina, the United States, Mexico, Japan and South Korea, plus Flamengo's victory in the Copa Libertadores.

As for the World Cup, we'll feature every match, team and star player in the January 2023 issue, plus an EyeWitness report from inside hosts Qatar. Don't miss it.

Jamie Evans, Assistant Editor

QATAR

Qatar responds to Socceroos' video

Speaking out...screenshots from Australia's video in which they raise concerns about Qatar's human rights record

Organisers of the World Cup admitted that "no country is perfect" after Australia's players released a video on social media criticising Qatar's record on migrant workers and LGBTQ+ rights.

The three-minute video, which came out in the build-up to the tournament, features a number of Socceroos internationals – including captain Mat Ryan, Sunderland defender Bailey Wright and Hearts centre-back Kye Rowles – discussing their concerns about the tournament. While they accept that progress has been made with "the *kafala* system largely dismantled", they also say that the "decision to host the World Cup in Qatar has resulted in the suffering and harm of countless of our fellow workers.

"These migrant workers are not just numbers."

While Qatar has addressed some of the criticism around labour laws, homosexuality remains illegal in the country.

"As players, we fully support the rights of LGBTI+ people," continues the video, "but in Qatar people are not free to love the person that they choose."

Another of the voices in the video is that of Craig Goodwin, whose Adelaide United team-mate Josh Cavallo made history last year by coming out as the only openly gay male top-flight footballer in the world.

The video concludes by calling for "a migrant resource centre, effective remedy for those who have been denied their rights, and the decriminalisation of all same-sex relationships" to ensure that the World Cup delivered a legacy that "football can truly be proud of."

Qatar's Supreme Committee for Delivery and Legacy – the tournament's organisers – said that they "commend footballers using their platforms to raise awareness

"Please do not allow football to be dragged into every ideological or political battle that exists. At FIFA, we try to respect all opinions and beliefs, without handing out moral lessons to the rest of the world"

FIFA president Gianni Infantino attempts to subdue any protests at Qatar

for important matters." However, the country's labour minister has already rejected calls to offer compensation to workers injured or killed in building stadia.

Shortly before the tournament began, the organisers came under further scrutiny after it was alleged that football fans were being offered all-expenses paid trips to the finals in exchange for sharing positive posts on social media.

Dutch broadcaster NOS reported that up to 50 Netherlands supporters had been asked to sign a code of conduct requiring them to share posts by the organising committee and report any "insulting" messages in exchange for flights, accommodation and match tickets. *The Times* also reported that 40 England and 40 Wales supporters had signed up to similar deals.

EUROPE

Russia excluded from Euro 2024

The Russian national team's exclusion from major tournaments continues, with UEFA confirming that they will not take part in the 2024 European Championship.

Russia was suspended by both FIFA and UEFA earlier in the year following the invasion of Ukraine. In July, an appeal to the Court of Arbitration for Sport to have the bans overturned was dismissed.

The decision means that there were only 53 teams in the draw for the Euro 2024 qualifiers, which took place at the start of October in Frankfurt. Euro 2020 finalists England and Italy being paired together in Group C and the Netherlands facing France in Group B were among the most eye-catching results of the draw.

Qualifying for the finals, which will be hosted by Germany, begins in March.

To view the full draw and matchday dates, see Results, Tables, Fixtures on page 94.

Euro 2024 draw...the ceremony was held in Frankfurt

The month in numbers

Eye-catching facts and stats from the world of football...

£3m
Expected price for the ball used in the 1986 World Cup quarter-final between England and Argentina – when Diego Maradana stole the show – which went up for auction in November.

Auction...iconic 1986 match ball

2
Ballons d'Or won by Alexia Putellas, making the Barcelona and Spain forward the first female footballer to win the award twice.

34
Years and ten months, the age Real Madrid striker Karim Benzema was when he won this year's Ballon d'Or, making him the oldest winner since Stanley Matthews in 1956.

-20
Rangers' goal difference in this season's Champions League group stage, making them the worst performers in the competition's history.

2024
Year that the next Asian Cup will likely take place – now scheduled for Qatar – after China pulled out from hosting rights in the summer of 2023 due to their Zero-COVID policy.

553
Previous appearance record for Atletico Madrid, which Spain midfielder Koke recently broke.

1
Tottenham's Harry Kane became the first player in Premier League history to score 100 away goals in the competition.

47
MLS and Liga MX teams that will take place in the revamped Leagues Cup from next year.

12
Egyptian Super Cups won by Al Ahly after they defeated arch-rivals Zamalek in the 2022 final.

A$15,000
Fine handed out to Sydney United 58 by Football Australia after some fans displayed Nazi salutes during the Australia Cup final.

1888
Year the Durand Cup was founded, the oldest existing club football tournament in Asia, with the 2022 version being won by Bengaluru who beat Mumbai City 2-1 in the final in Kolkata.

3
Barcelona players to have won the Golden Boy award after Gavi was named the 2022 winner, following Pedri (2021) and Lionel Messi (2005).

1
UEFA announced that the first women's Nations League will take place in 2023, with the tournament commencing in the Autumn.

10
Players sent off in the Argentinian Champions Trophy clash between Boca Juniors and Racing.

6
Bids to host the 2025 Africa Cup of Nations, after Guinea had hosting rights stripped by the Confederation of African Football for not being ready to host the competition.

16
Years, three months and four days, the age of Brazilian wonderkid Endrick as he became Palmeiras' youngest-ever goalscorer.

Record breaker... Endrick

Keir RADNEDGE
THE INSIDER

Super League looms back over the horizon

ESL ringleaders... Florentino Perez, Andrea Agnelli and Joan Laporta

Lennart Johansson was relaxed, precise but dismissive. He told me: "This has no significance and no relevance. In sport we have our own rules and regulations and even referees. UEFA is based in Switzerland. European Union laws do not affect us. Their lawyers have no place in our football."

Johansson, Swedish president of the European federation, was speaking to me in the summer of 1995 about a barely-noticed legal action that had been set before the European Court of Justice. But Johansson was living in an ivory tower.

That ivory tower came crashing down six months later. December 15, 1995 was the historic date on which the European Court of Justice in Luxembourg ruled in favour of a restraint-of-trade complaint by a modest Belgian second-division footballer, Jean-Marc Bosman.

Football, quite simply, would never be the same again.

Bosman had sought legal redress over the refusal, five years earlier, of RFC Liege to release him to play for FC Dunkerque over the French border. The verdict was narrow but the subsequent consequences wide-ranging: players were granted end-of-contract free transfers and all of Europe's foreign player restrictions would be swept aside.

Now football may stand on the brink of a legal twist as ground-breaking as Bosman.

On December 15 – same date, by coincidence – the Advocate General from the European Court will assess whether UEFA can justifiably use its monopolistic powers to outlaw the European Super League.

This is the latest and potentially most explosive chapter in a long story.

Powerful clubs have kicked over the traces ever since the creation of the European Cup in 1955. Since then, the big clubs have had UEFA on the run, demanding an ever-increasing share of revenue in return for staying within the fold. Hence, in 2024, the three European club competitions will all expand their numbers. Every three years the clubs say: "Jump!" and UEFA asks how high.

European football governance is lop-sided. UEFA works hand-in-glove to the tune of €15m-a-year with the European Club Association (more on them on page 62). This has two delegates on the UEFA executive and yet they speak for only around 250 members, less than a quarter of the continent's top division clubs. Many other clubs seethe, disenfranchised, because UEFA's power derives from the national associations, not them and their leagues.

UEFA and whoever may be its president – currently Aleksander Ceferin – are jealously protective of the Champions League goose, which lays its richly golden eggs. Understandably. Even FIFA, its

The columns of *World Soccer* have reflected, down all its 62 years, the illusions and debates surrounding a prospective super league. Who would compete? How would they be chosen? When would they play?

acquisitive eyes hypnotised by club competition wealth, was forced to kick into the long grass its dream of an expanded Club World Cup.

The columns of *World Soccer* have reflected, down all its 62 years, the illusions and debates surrounding a prospective super league. Who would compete? How would they be chosen? When would they play? What would befall the home leagues? Who would run the show? How would fans react?

No question, of course, that television and sponsors would love it.

The big clubs continued pushing at the open door before the so-called "Dirty Dozen" sought to smash it down with the ESL launch in April 2021. To describe the launch as a Mickey Mouse effort would be a gross insult to Walt Disney. The project was muddled, the timing awful and the reaction disastrous. Inside a week it had collapsed, leaving the presidents of only Barcelona, Juventus and Real Madrid – Joan Laporta, Andrea Agnelli and Florentino Perez – floating in dreamland.

If UEFA had said: "OK, let's just put this behind us," that might have been that. For a few years anyway. But UEFA's threat of punitive disciplinary action pushed Juve, Madrid and Barcelona into a corner and they came out fighting, in the Spanish commercial court.

Why was UEFA's response so aggressive? Observers have speculated about Ceferin's sense of personal betrayal. He had counted Agnelli as a personal friend and is godfather to the Juve chief's daughter.

All that became academic last spring when the European Superleague Company SL went to court in Madrid. The initial action was to obtain an injunction barring UEFA from taking disciplinary action. Then came a substantive claim that UEFA was abusing its monopoly position under EU competition law by prohibiting third-party tournaments.

On April 20, Judge Manuel Ruiz de Lara referred six key questions for a ruling by the ECJ. The issue at stake was not the Super League per se, but whether UEFA was in breach of Articles 101 and 102 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union on cartels and abuse of dominant positions. This would include UEFA's claim to the right to punish clubs and/or players participating in the Super League.

Initial submissions were kicked around in Luxembourg on July 11 and 12. Two-dozen European governments and national associations queued up to support UEFA. The nub of the defence is that UEFA is the ultimate exemplar of the European sports model. The revenues it generates through its tournaments are shared down through all the national associations to support the social significance of grassroots sport.

UEFA lawyer Donald Slater told the judges that it was a closed league of rich clubs that was the real "textbook example of a cartel". He added: "If UEFA had been compelled to authorise such a closed competition, other closed leagues would have emerged, leading to a systemic collapse of the European sports model."

The European Commission has long been sceptical about permitting sport too much legal leeway. Its own opinion was that while UEFA may have "legitimate objectives to restrict competition" any defence of the European sports model "must respect European law, in particular with regard to competition law and fundamental freedoms."

Agnelli, Perez and Laporta believe that UEFA is abusing its power in its monopolistic obstruction of the Super League; that UEFA is unfair in wanting the best of both worlds as both regulatory body and commercial rival.

Similar cases have already come before the ECJ, notably concerning motorcycle racing and ice-skating. The Court is not opposed to a regulatory body holding a dual role as competition organiser. But it has ruled in the past that checks and balances should exist to prevent a self-interested abuse of process.

The importance of the case is such that the ECJ set it before the full Grand Chamber of 15 judges. The opinion of Athanasios Rantos, the Greek Advocate General, will be delivered on December 15 and is expected to be endorsed, probably early in the new year, by the Grand Chamber. The ruling will then be referred back down to the Madrid commercial court.

Simply, this concerns the extent of UEFA's power to run European football; the wider issue is all about who runs the game and who runs its competitions? A host of international promoters, media multinationals and financiers are waiting to pounce.

Exactly 27 years after Bosman, the authority of UEFA and all football's governing bodies is back on trial.

"Super greed"...Premier League fans led the opposition to the Super League proposals in 2021

BOOKS THIS MONTH

COCKER HOOP
By Robert Endeacott and Dave Cocker (Pitch Publishing, £19.99)

Cocker Hoop is the biography of coaching great Les Cocker. As a player he established himself as a tenacious forward, before retiring in 1958 to move into coaching. As one of the first recipients of full coaching badges at England's Lilleshall, Les proved himself a supreme trainer for Leeds, helping build a famous footballing dynasty alongside Don Revie. That attracted the FA's attention, and Cocker would go on to help England achieve World Cup success in 1966 under Alf Ramsey.

ERIC AND DAVE
By Spencer Vignes (Pitch Publishing, £18.99)

A heart-warming story of lifelong pals Eric Gill (now 92) and Dave Hollins (84) whose unique friendship started out as a rivalry, wrestling over the same goalkeeper jersey at Brighton & Hove Albion during the mid-1950s. Almost 70 years later they remain the best of friends having lived long, eventful lives bookended by the horrors of World War Two and the COVID-19 pandemic.

Jonathan WILSON
TECHNICALLY SPEAKING

Is Xavi up to the Barcelona job?

It was Barcelona's 4-0 win in the *Clasico* in March that seemed to offer evidence that a Xavi-inspired renaissance was possible. And it was a 3-1 defeat in the *Clasico* in October that suggested responses to that 4-0 victory at the Bernabeu had been far too optimistic. It remains, still, early-ish days, but not all that early – and there have been a number of worrying signs this season.

No Barcelona manager in the past 20 years has reached 50 games in charge with such a poor record. To an extent that is understandable. Frank Rijkaard is the only other of those managers not to have Lionel Messi for that first run of games. Xavi is overseeing a major revamp of the side. But that is part of the problem. The pulling of all those financial levers in the summer, essentially mortgaging the future of the club, has made everything fraught.

For Xavi, the terms of the game have changed. When he replaced Ronald Koeman last season, the job was largely about rediscovering the club ethos and giving opportunities to the latest remarkable crop of young talent. But in the summer, Barcelona spent a net £104 million. That may not sound a huge amount set against the sums spent in the Premier League, but it was almost £90m more than Atletico Madrid, the next highest spenders. He is now dealing with experienced pros, and with pressure.

Building a team takes time, but Xavi has no time. It's been suggested that the club budgeted for reaching the quarter-final of the Champions League this season, that that is where Barca need to be to initiate the virtuous circle of success and growth Joan Laporta is banking on, that he appears to have gambled the future of the club upon. The Champions League draw was tough, grouping Barca with Bayern Munich and Internazionale, but as much as the results it's the nature of the performances against the big sides that have raised concerns.

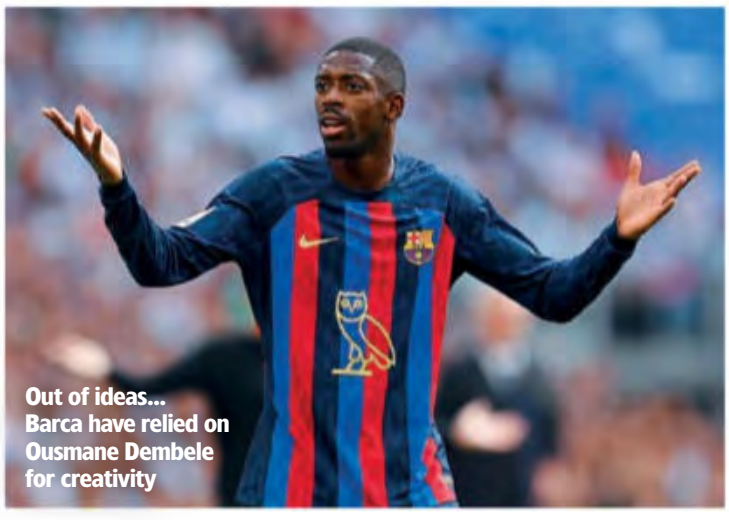
Under pressure ...Xavi reacts to Barcelona's defeat at the Bernabeu

> The assumption, given the player he was, is that Xavi possesses a great footballing intelligence...but perhaps Xavi was simply an excellent passer of the ball

In many ways, Barca's season had seemed to be going well. After the great rush to comply with Spain's financial fair play regulations and get players registered, a disappointing goalless draw with Rayo Vallecano was perhaps only to be expected. But Barca then won seven in a row in the league after that to go top of the table. They dismissed Viktoria Plzen, in Europe, as expected.

But this is the issue of modern football. For a superclub – and Barca retain that status for now – games fall into two categories: those in which anything but a win is a major surprise, and the matches against other members of the elite. And in each of those meetings with the elite, Barca have been found wanting.

There were excuses. They did have the better of the first half against Bayern in Munich, and would have been ahead but for a couple of uncharacteristic misses from Robert Lewandowski. But two rapid attacks



Out of ideas... Barca have relied on Ousmane Dembele for creativity

in transition did for them. After the away game against Inter, Xavi chose to blame a couple of marginal refereeing decisions that went against Barca, while dismissing his Italian opponents as a "defensive" side. But in both of those games, Barca had ended up out of ideas, lumping cross after cross into the box.

Barca escaped with a 3-3 draw at home against Inter thanks to two fine late Lewandowski finishes, but it was Inter that had looked the smarter, their counter-attacks laced with menace and precision. Barca had simply had a lot of the ball, had played a lot of passes without getting anywhere. It was a similar story in the 3-1 defeat to Real Madrid: Barca with possession but little incisiveness; their opponents cutting through almost at will.

And that's when an awful suspicion begins to mount. The assumption, given the player he was, is that Xavi possesses a great footballing intelligence. It feels that his sort of midfielder, always able to find the angle for the pass, always aware of the distribution of players on the pitch, must become a good manager because he has such an obvious understanding of the geometry of the pitch.

But perhaps Xavi was simply an excellent passer of the ball. Perhaps, sitting at the knee of Pep Guardiola, he has learned the phrases and can parrot them, without being able to construct attacking and defensive systems. Perhaps he is a cargo-cult coach, able to mimic processes without understanding them in the way of a great coach. He wouldn't be the first elegant midfielder to fall unexpectedly short as a coach.

Perhaps. Perhaps this is just a blip. Perhaps the excuses are valid. Perhaps Barca will find a way of attacking against the elite that does not simply involve Ousmane Dembele swinging endless crosses towards Lewandowski. But if Xavi is to achieve that, he needs to do so quickly, before more financial levers need to be pulled.

OBITUARIES

Pioneer ...Sammy Chung in action for Watford

Sammy CHUNG
(1932-2022)
A footballing pioneer as one of the first Anglo-Chinese players in English football. After a playing career that featured an eight-year spell at Watford, Chung went on to manage Wolverhampton Wanderers, where he won the Second Division title in 1977.

Omar BORRAS
(1929-2022)
Only Oscar Washington Tabarez has taken charge of more Uruguay games than Borras, who guided the *Celeste* to Copa America glory in 1983. Claimed to have coined the expression "group of death" after being drawn with West Germany, Denmark and Scotland at the 1986 World Cup.

Fred CALLAGHAN
(1944-2022)
A Fulham legend, playing over 300 games for the West London club in a ten-year spell, earning the nickname "The Tank" for his runs up the wing from left-back or left-half.

Yuriy DEHTERYOV
(1948-2022)
A Shakhtar Donetsk legend, playing 378 games between 1967 and 1983, placing the keeper fifth on the club's all time appearance list.

John DUNCAN
(1949-2022)
Scottish forward who scored over 100 league goals for Dundee, Tottenham Hotspur and Derby County in the 1970s, before going on to manage Scunthorpe United, Hartlepool United, Chesterfield and Ipswich Town in the Football League.

Keith EDDY
(1944-2022)
Former midfielder who played for Watford and Sheffield United before moving to America to join New York Cosmos, captaining a team starring Pele and Franz Beckenbauer.

Len JOHNROSE
(1969-2022)
A former midfielder who made over 500 career appearances for Blackburn Rovers, Preston North End, Hartlepool United, Bury, Burnley and Swansea City, who was diagnosed with motor neurone disease after retiring.

Masato KUDO
(1990-2022)
The former Japan forward passed away due to complications following brain surgery at the age of 32. His clubs included Kashiwa Reysol, Sanfrecce Hiroshima and Tegevajaro Miyazaki.

Jimmy MILLAR
(1934-2022)
A prolific striker for Rangers in the 1950s and 1960s, scoring 162 goals in 317 games. He helped the side win three league titles, five Scottish Cups and three League Cups, as well as reaching the 1961 Cup Winners' Cup final.

Ronnie RADFORD
(1943-2022)
The scorer of one of the most iconic FA Cup goals of all time, Radford's 35-yard stunner helped non-league Hereford United knock First Division Newcastle United out of the competition in the third round in 1972.

Stavros SARAFIS
(1950-2022)
A one-club man with PAOK, and the club's all-time record scorer. Later took caretaker charge of the club on five separate occasions.

Piet SCHRIJVERS
(1946-2022)
The Netherlands' reserve goalkeeper at the 1974 World Cup and played all three second round group stage matches in 1978, but missed the final through injury. He also won five Eredivisie titles with Ajax.

Luciano VASSALLO
(1935-2022)
Italian-born midfielder who went on to captain Ethiopia to the only trophy in their history, the 1962 Africa Cup of Nations. Remained in the country as a coach, taking charge of the national team on three separate occasions.

Gian Piero VENTRONE
(1960-2022)
A hugely popular member of Tottenham's backroom staff, following Antonio Conte to North London to work as the club's fitness trainer in November 2021. Prior to that, he had worked for a host of major teams across almost 30 years in football, including a decade at Juventus, a spell working with Italy ahead of the 2006 World Cup victory, and at Chinese clubs Jiangsu and Guangzhou.

Tribute... Ventrone was highly popular at Tottenham

"We haven't got through to Dele Alli yet. Let's not discuss Dele Alli as a player, but he is below expectations"

Besiktas coach Senol Gunes discusses on-loan midfielder Dele Alli

PEOPLE ON THE MOVE

IN

EUROPE

Comeback complete...Antoine Griezmann

Atletico Madrid finally completed the permanent re-signing of forward **ANTOINE GRIEZMANN** from Barcelona. The France international reportedly had a clause in his loan contract obliging Atletico to buy him for €40 million once he'd played over 45 minutes in more than half of their games.

Newcastle United agreed a deal to sign 18-year-old Australia forward **GARANG KUOL** from A-League club Central Coast Mariners.

West Ham announced that former captain **MARK NOBLE** will become their sporting director in January.

West Ham legend...Mark Noble

Greek giants Olympiakos signed **JAMES RODRIGUEZ** from Qatari side Al Rayyan and former Fulham midfielder **PAJTIM KASAMI**.

Algeria international winger **YOUCEF BELAILI** joined Ajaccio having been released by Brest at the end of September. One-time Chelsea prodigy **GAEL KAKUTA** re-joined Amiens from Lens, while **TIMOTHEE KOLODZIEJCZAK** moved to Schalke after being released by Saint-Etienne.

First job in management...Xabi Alonso

Sacked...Steven Gerrard exited Aston Villa

MANAGERIAL CHANGES

League	Club	Appointed	Replacing
Pro League	Anderlecht	Robin Veldman*	Felice Mazzu
Pro League	Mechelen	Steven Defour	Danny Buijs
Division One	Omonia Nicosia	Yannick Ferrera	Neil Lennon
Premier League	Aston Villa	Unai Emery	Steven Gerrard
Premier League	Brighton	Roberto De Zerbi	Graham Potter
Premier League	Wolves	Julen Lopetegui	Bruno Lage
Championship	Cardiff City	Mark Hudson*	Steve Morison
Championship	Huddersfield	Mark Fotheringham	Danny Schofield
Championship	Hull City	Liam Rosenior	Shota Arveladze
Championship	Middlesbrough	Michael Carrick	Chris Wilder
Championship	Rotherham	Matt Taylor	Paul Warne
Championship	Watford	Slaven Bilic	Rob Edwards
Championship	West Brom	Carlos Corberan	Steve Bruce
League One	Burton Albion	Dino Maamria	Jimmy-Floyd Hasselbaink
League One	Derby County	Paul Warne	Liam Rosenior
League One	Exeter City	Gary Caldwell	Matt Taylor
Ligue 1	Auxerre	Christophe Pelissier	Jean-Marc Furlan
Ligue 1	Brest	Bruno Grougi*	Michel Der Zakarian
Ligue 1	Lyon	Laurent Blanc	Peter Bosz
Ligue 1	Montpellier	Romain Pitau*	Olivier Dall'Oglio
Ligue 1	Reims	Will Still*	Oscar Garcia
Bundesliga	Bochum	Thomas Letsch	Thomas Reis
Bundesliga	Leverkusen	Xabi Alonso	Gerardo Seoane
Bundesliga	RB Leipzig	Marco Rose	Domenico Tedesco
Bundesliga	Schalke	Thomas Reis	Frank Kramer
Bundesliga	Stuttgart	Michael Wimmer*	Pellegrino Matarazzo
Serie A	Bologna	Thiago Motta	Sinisa Mihajlovic
Serie A	Hellas Verona	Salvatore Boccetti	Gabriele Cioffi
Serie A	Monza	Raffaele Palladino	Giovanni Stroppa
Serie A	Sampdoria	Dejan Stankovic	Marco Giampaolo
Serie B	Benevento	Fabio Cannavaro	Fabio Caserta
Eredivisie	Cambuur	Pascal Bosschaart*	Henk de Jong
Eredivisie	Fortuna Sittard	Julio Velazquez	Sjors Ultee
Eredivisie	Vitesse	Phillip Cocu	Thomas Letsch
Primeira Liga	Famalicao	Joao Pedro Sousa	Rui Pedro Silva
Primeira Liga	Pacos Ferreira	Jose Mota	Cesar Peixoto
Premiership	Dundee United	Liam Fox	Jack Ross
La Liga	Celta Vigo	Carlos Carvalhal	Eduardo Coudet
La Liga	Elche	Sergio Mantecon*	Jorge Almiron
La Liga	Sevilla	Jorge Sampaoli	Julen Lopetegui
La Liga	Villarreal	Quique Setien	Unai Emery

*Caretaker managers

"I will become a regular fan. I will support the team. I will pass my love for Barca to my children, like my family did with me. And you know me, sooner or later, I will be back"

Gerard Pique on his decision to retire

Ex-Southampton, Sampdoria and Uruguay midfielder **GASTON RAMIREZ** dropped down to Serie C side Virtus Entella, having been released by Monza.

New Zealand international **RYAN THOMAS** joined PEC Zwolle from PSV, while Cameroon free agent **ARNAUD DJOUM** joined Dundee United.

Former Atalanta forward **JOSIP ILICIC** returned to Slovenia to sign for Maribor, whom he played for in 2010.

AFRICA

South African champions Mamelodi Sundowns named **RULANI MOKWENA** as their new head coach.

ASIA

In the United Arab Emirates, Al Wahda signed Brazilian midfielder **ALLAN** from Everton, while **ADEL TAARABT** joined Al Nasr from Benfica. **JASON DENAYER**, who had been a free agent since leaving Lyon in the summer, joined Shabab Al Ahli.

Appointments, sackings and loans

OUT

EUROPE

Brighton and Zambia midfielder **ENOCK MWEPU** was forced to retire at the age of 24 after being diagnosed with a hereditary heart condition.

Tribute...Enock Mwepu's shirt on Brighton's centre circle at the Amex Stadium

Northern Ireland sacked coach **IAN BARACLOUGH** after only winning twice in 2022. Armenia also parted company with their manager, **JOAQUIN CAPARROS**, after their UEFA Nations League relegation to League C.

Croatian right-back **SIME VRSALJKO** announced his international retirement after a serious of recent injuries.

Former England internationals **BEN FOSTER** and **FABIAN DELPH** both announced their retirements from football. Elsewhere, **FRANCK RIBERY** also hung up his boots after a knee injury, but the former France winger will remain at Salernitana as a coach.

Retiring...Ribery

CONCACAF

Inter Miami striker **GONZALO HIGUAIN** ended his playing career after the conclusion of the MLS season.

Pique announces his retirement

Barcelona defender Gerard Pique ended his playing career at the start of November.

The home game versus Almeria saw the World Cup-winning defender play his last match at Camp Nou, but his final game before retirement ended on a sour note when he was sent off in the dugout away to Osasuna.

With 616 matches, Pique ends his career in fifth place on the club's list of all-time appearance makers and with more than 30 trophies to his name, including eight La Ligas, three Champions Leagues and seven Copas del Rey.

His departure will ease the financial burden on Barcelona, who still face significant debts. Despite slipping down the pecking order, Pique remained one of the club's biggest earners, along with Sergio Busquets, who is expected to join Inter Miami at the end of the season.

For now Pique will focus on his business interests, including ownership of Spanish second-tier side Andorra FC, before potentially eyeing an eventual return to Camp Nou as club president.

Final farewell...Pique departs Camp Nou for the last time

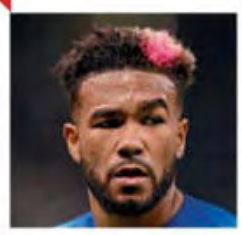
ASIA

Australia striker **BRUNO FORNAROLI** joined Melbourne Victory after his Perth Glory contract was terminated following a fall-out on social media.

Former Nigeria midfielder **JON OBI MIKEL**, who last played for Kuwait SC, announced his retirement, as did former Celtic and Japan midfielder **SHUNSUKE NAKAMURA** at the age of 44.

SOUTH AMERICA

DENTINHO cancelled his contract with Brazilians Ceara, having arrived from Shakhtar Donetsk in March.



"Devastated. The minute I injured my knee, I knew the turnaround to make the World Cup would be tight...Good luck to the boys. I'll be back soon"

England and Chelsea right-back Reece James on missing out on World Cup selection

WORLD CUP 2022 SQUAD WATCH

Shock Germany recall for Gotze

Mario Gotze, the match-winning goalscorer of the 2014 World Cup final, is called up by the *Nationalmannschaft* after a five-year absence

● GERMANY
One of the biggest shocks of all the World Cup squad announcements was **Mario Gotze** being recalled after last playing for Germany way back in 2017. Uncapped strikers **Niclas Fullkrug** and **Youssoufa Moukoko** were also picked after injuries ruled out **Timo Werner**, **Lukas Nmecha** and **Marco Reus**.

● SENEGAL
Sadio Mane was included in Aliou Cisse's squad despite an injury scare.

● AUSTRALIA
Teenage striker **Garang Kuol** was the wildcard name in a Socceroos roster that omitted defender **Trent Sainsbury**, attacking midfielder **Tom Rogic** and goalkeeper **Mitch Langerak**.

● ENGLAND
In-form pair **James Maddison** and **Callum Wilson**, who both last played for England in 2019, were the headline makers in Gareth Southgate's squad.

● FRANCE
Mike Maignan, **N'Golo Kante** and **Paul Pogba** missed out for *Les Bleus* through injury, while full-backs **Ferland Mendy**, **Lucas Digne** and **Jonathan Clauss** were omitted. **Raphael Varane** was selected despite being an injury doubt, while **Axel Disasi** was a late replacement for **Presnel Kimpembe**.

● NETHERLANDS
Veteran keeper **Jasper Cillessen** was left out by *Oranje*, with coach Louis van Gaal preferring **Remko Pasveer**, **Justin Bijlow** and **Andries Noppert**. In other tight calls, **Jeremie Frimpong** edged out **Devyne Rensch** at right-back and **Xavi Simons** ousted **Ryan Gravenberch**.

● JAPAN
The big-name omissions from Samurai Blue were attacking midfielder **Genki Haraguchi**, and strikers **Yuya Osako** and **Kyogo Furuhashi**. Centre-back **Ko Itakura** was picked after recovering from a knee injury, but fellow defender **Yuta Nakayama** pulled out after having Achilles surgery. Home-based forward **Shuto Machino** was drafted in his place.

● CROATIA
There were no shocks in Zlatko Dalic's party, with captain **Luka Modric** set to play at a fourth World Cup finals.

● MOROCCO
Hakim Ziyech, as expected, was named in the Atlas Lions' party after previously being exiled from the national team, but **Munir El Haddadi**, **Ayoub El Kaabi**, and brothers **Samy** and **Ryan Mmaee** were overlooked. Trio **Adam Masina**, **Imran Louza** and **Tarik Tissoudali** were injured.

● SPAIN
Liverpool midfielder **Thiago** missed out on Luis Enrique's 26-man squad, but young wingers **Nico Williams**, **Ansu Fati** and **Yeremy** did make the cut.

Left out...Spain midfielder Thiago

● UNITED STATES
Goalkeeper **Zack Steffen** was a shock omission from Gregg Berhalter's roster. The US coach also cut forwards **Ricardo Pepi**, **Paul Arriola** and **Jordan Pefok** from his party, and picked centre-back **Tim Ream** following injuries to **Chris Richards** and **Miles Robinson**.

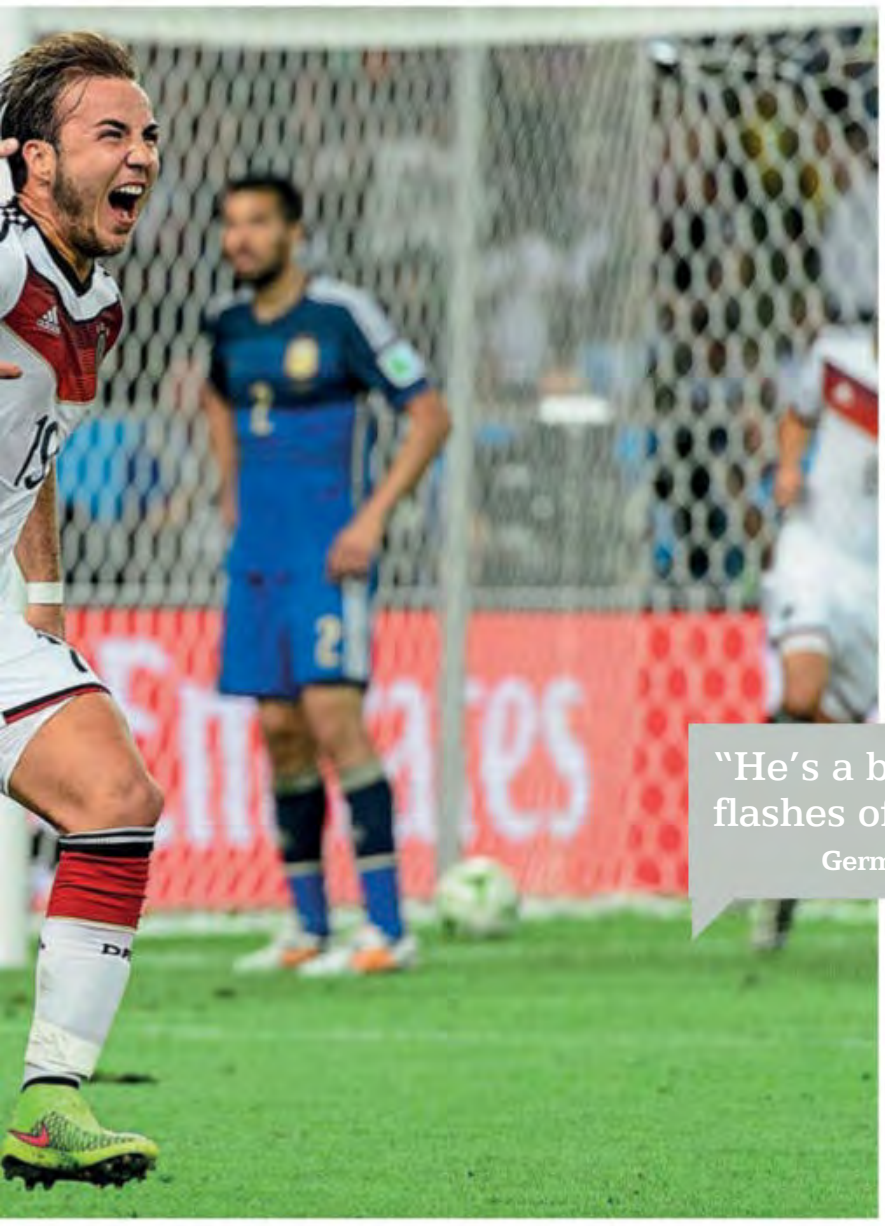
● BRAZIL
The big calls by Tite saw **Gabriel Martinelli** picked in place of **Roberto Firmino**, **Everton Ribeiro** selected ahead of **Philippe Coutinho** and **Bremer** preferred to **Gabriel**.

● CAMEROON
Defender **Michael Ngadeu** was a shock omission from Rigobert Song's squad.

● COSTA RICA
Six veterans from *Los Ticos'* successful 2014 World Cup adventure were selected, including **Keylor Navas**, **Bryan Ruiz** and **Joel Campbell**.

"A kid born in a refugee camp wasn't supposed to make it! But here we are going to the World Cup. Don't let no one tell you that your dreams are unrealistic"

Bayern Munich's Alphonso Davies on making Canada's World Cup squad



"He's a brilliant footballer who has flashes of inspiration"

Germany coach Hansi Flick on Mario Gotze

Recalled...Mario Gotze hit the winner in the 2014 World Cup final

● WALES
A hamstring injury to **Rhys Norrington-Davies** saw the versatile defender miss out, with **Tom Lockyer** the beneficiary.

● PORTUGAL
Attackers **Joao Felix**, **Rafael Leao**, **Ricardo Horta**, **Goncalo Ramos** and **Andre Silva** joined **Cristiano Ronaldo** in Fernando Santos' squad at the expense of **Goncalo Guedes** and injured duo **Diogo Jota** and **Pedro Neto**. Midfielder **Renato Sanches** was a shock absentee.

● POLAND
Lack of game time for Leeds United midfielder **Mateusz Klich**, and injuries to left-back **Arkadiusz Reca** and defensive midfielder **Jacek Goralski** saw them left out of Czeslaw Michniewicz's squad.

● ARGENTINA
Giovani Lo Celso failed to make Lionel Scaloni's squad due to injury, but fitness doubt **Paulo Dybala** was included.

● SERBIA
There was little controversy in Dragan Stojkovic's squad, with Red Star Belgrade centre-back **Strahinja Erakovic** the only home-based player in the party.

● GHANA
Midfielder **Baba Iddrissu**, and keepers **Joe Wollacott** and **Richard Ofori** were all ruled out with injury, while uncapped forward **Kamal Sowah** was included with **Felix Afena-Gyan** missing out.

● QATAR
The host nation included big-hitters **Akram Afif** and **Almoez Ali** in their 26-man party along with uncapped defender **Jassem Gaber**.

● SWITZERLAND
Bucking the trend of most squads, Murat Yakin named four goalkeepers in his squad, while right-backs **Kevin Mbabu** and **Jordan Lotomba** were excluded at the expense of the versatile **Edimilson Fernandes** and uncapped midfielder **Fabian Rieder**.

● TUNISIA
Eagles of Carthage coach Jalel Kadri recalled 38-year-old keeper **Aymen "Balbouli" Mathlouthi** after a four-year absence from the national team.

● SOUTH KOREA
Star man **Son Heung-min** was selected despite suffering a fractured eye socket.

Injured...Argentina's Giovani Lo Celso

● DENMARK
Christian Eriksen was included in Kasper Hjulmand's Denmark squad, as was injury doubt **Yussuf Poulsen**, but Leicester City's **Jannik Vestergaard** and **Daniel Iversen** were overlooked.

● BELGIUM
Younger defenders **Arthur Theate**, **Wout Faes** and **Zeno Debast** were preferred to the more experienced duo **Dedryck Boyata** and **Jason Denayer**.

● CANADA
The big casualty from John Herdman's final selection was back-up goalkeeper **Maxime Crepeau**, who broke his leg playing for LAFC in the MLS Cup final.

● MEXICO
Jesus Corona failed to recover from an ankle fracture, while **Santiago Gimenez** and **Diego Lainez** also missed the cut.

● IRAN
Iran named a 25-man party that included fitness worry and star striker **Sardar Azmoun**, plus four goalkeepers. But **Omid Noorafkan**, **Milad Sarlak**, **Saleh Hardani** and injured midfielder **Omid Ebrahimi** all missed out.

● SAUDI ARABIA
Injury doubts **Saleh Al Shehri** and **Salman Al Faraj** were included in Herve Renard's squad, while **Nawaf Al Abed** replaced winger **Fahad Al Muwallad**.

● URUGUAY
Right-back **Damian Suarez** was the big absentee from Diego Alonso's squad. **Guillermo Varela** and the uncapped **Jose Luis Rodriguez** were called up instead, with **Ronald Araujo** also included despite having thigh surgery.

Ecuador hadn't announced their squad as of our print deadline. Full World Cup squad lists with shirt numbers will be published in January's issue.

Squad details correct as of 14.11.22

NEXT MONTH
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JANUARY ISSUE ON SALE DEC 30

ESM XI
EUROPEAN SPORTS MEDIA

SEASON RANKINGS
Cumulative votes through the season

GOALKEEPERS

Thibaut Courtois (Real Madrid)	10
Gianluigi Donnarumma (PSG)	3
Yann Sommer (B. M'Gladbach)	3
Diogo Costa (Porto)	1
Rafal Gikiewicz (Augsburg)	1
Gregor Kobel (Borussia Dortmund)	1
Mike Maignan (Milan)	1
Juan Musso (Atalanta)	1
Rui Patricio (Roma)	1
Geronimo Rulli (Villarreal)	1
Marc-Andre ter Stegen (Barcelona)	1

DEFENDERS

David Alaba (Real Madrid)	8
Joao Cancelo (Manchester City)	7
Dani Carvajal (Real Madrid)	6
Kim Min-jae (Napoli)	6
Benjamin Pavard (Bayern Munich)	6
Ruben Dias (Manchester City)	3
Eric Dier (Tottenham)	3
Eder Militao (Real Madrid)	3
William Saliba (Arsenal)	3
Pau Torres (Villarreal)	3
Danilo (Juventus)	2
Gabriel (Arsenal)	2
Alex Grimaldo (Benfica)	2
Theo Hernandez (Milan)	2
Roger Ibanez (Roma)	2
Lisandro Martinez (Manchester Utd)	2
Ferland Mendy (Real Madrid)	2
Nuno Tavares (Marseille)	2
Rafael Toloi (Atalanta)	2
Virgil van Dijk (Liverpool)	2
Toby Alderweireld (Antwerp)	1
Ronald Araujo (Barcelona)	1
Rodrigo Becao (Udinese)	1
Ramy Bensebaini (B. M'Gladbach)	1
Leonardo Bonucci (Juventus)	1
Marc Cucurella (Chelsea)	1
Diogo Dalot (Manchester United)	1
Alphonso Davies (Bayern Munich)	1
Oscar De Marcos (Athletic Bilbao)	1
Denzel Dumfries (Internazionale)	1
Achraf Hakimi (PSG)	1
Lucas Hernandez (Bayern Munich)	1
Paul Jaeckel (Union Berlin)	1
Reece James (Chelsea)	1
Jules Kounde (Barcelona)	1
Tyrell Malacia (Manchester United)	1
Alfonso Pedraza (Villarreal)	1
Amir Rrahmani (Napoli)	1
Antonio Rudiger (Real Madrid)	1
Mario Rui (Napoli)	1
Antonio Silva (Benfica)	1
Dayot Upamecano (Bayern Munich)	1
Kyle Walker (Manchester City)	1
Oleksandr Zinchenko (Arsenal)	1

MIDFIELDERS

Kevin De Bruyne (Manchester City)	11
Martin Odegaard (Arsenal)	7
Luka Modric (Real Madrid)	6
Aurelien Tchouameni (Real Madrid)	5
Joshua Kimmich (Bayern Munich)	4
Pedri (Barcelona)	4
Federico Valverde (Real Madrid)	4
Jamal Musiala (Bayern Munich)	3
Jude Bellingham (Borussia Dortmund)	2
Enzo Fernandez (Benfica)	2
Ilkay Gundogan (Manchester City)	2
Toni Kroos (Real Madrid)	2
Marco Verratti (PSG)	2
Christian Eriksen (Manchester United)	1
Bruno Fernandes (Manchester United)	1
Pierre-Emile Hojbjerg (Tottenham)	1
Teun Koopmeiners (Atalanta)	1
Stanislav Lobotka (Napoli)	1
Roberto Pereyra (Udinese)	1
Bernardo Silva (Manchester City)	1
Thiago (Liverpool)	1
Vitinha (PSG)	1
Piotr Zielinski (Napoli)	1

FORWARDS

Erling Haaland (Manchester City)	23
Robert Lewandowski (Barcelona)	10
Neymar (PSG)	8
Aleksandar Mitrovic (Fulham)	6
Vinicius Jr (Real Madrid)	6
Lionel Messi (PSG)	4
Karim Benzema (Real Madrid)	3
Khvicha Kvaratskhelia (Napoli)	3
Sheraldo Becker (Union Berlin)	2
Ousmane Dembele (Barcelona)	2
Gabriel Jesus (Arsenal)	2
Rafael Leao (Milan)	2
Sadio Mane (Bayern Munich)	2
Gabriel Martinelli (Arsenal)	2
Kylian Mbappe (PSG)	2
Dusan Vlahovic (Juventus)	2
Vincent Janssen (Antwerp)	1
Dango Ouattara (Lorient)	1
Marcus Rashford (Manchester United)	1
Leroy Sane (Bayern Munich)	1
Rafa Silva (Benfica)	1

ESM MEMBERS: *A Bola* (Portugal), *Fanatik* (Turkey), *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* (Germany), *La Gazzetta dello Sport* (Italy), *Kicker* (Germany), *Marca* (Spain), *Nemzeti Sport* (Hungary), *Sport/Foot* (Belgium), *De Telegraaf* (Netherlands), *TIPS Bladet* (Denmark), *ElfVoetbal* (Netherlands), *World Soccer* (England)

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eyewitness

John Duerden reports

INDONESIA

The Kanjuruhan Stadium disaster

On October 1, Indonesia's Kanjuruhan Stadium joined a list containing the likes of Hillsborough, Accra Sports Stadium, Ibrox, Heysel and the Estadio Nacional as a place that will forever be associated with the tragic death of football fans. At the time of writing, at least 135 supporters who saw Arema Malang lose 3-2 to Persebaya Surabaya in their league match lost their lives, a figure that includes more than 30 children. There have been plenty of problems in Indonesian football over the years, including losses of life on a semi-regular basis, but nothing like this.

There were no away fans at this East Javan derby, a local rivalry if not the fiercest in this country of 270 million, so early reports of clashes between supporters were wide of the mark. At the end of the game, a few hundred Arema fans entered the playing area in order, they said, to talk to the players – not uncommon in the country – and were greeted with tear gas and baton swings from security forces. This caused a stampede for the exits in a stadium that was already overcrowded, with a reported 42,000 fans when there should have been 38,000. President

Accusations...graffiti outside the Kanjuruhan Stadium

Chaos...police attempt to remove fans from the pitch

Joko Widodo said later that some of the gates had been locked and others, while open, allowed just one or two to exit at a time, and the results were disastrous.

A local police chief and elite force members were fired and there have been and will continue to be investigations held into precisely what happened. There are concerns among fans that there will be more focus on gates, doors and stairs than the actions of the security forces, who tend to operate in isolation from each other and are often untrained and unprepared for games. For years supporters have complained of heavy-handed forms of policing in sometimes decrepit stadiums, where the approach is often to hit first and not even bother to ask questions later, thereby escalating situations rather than seeking to control them. In 2016, police were accused of killing 16-year-old supporter Muhammad Fahreza who was attending a game between Persija Jakarta and Persela Lamongan. It's fair to say that relations between fans and police have been sour for some time.

LONG-STANDING PROBLEMS

The world's fourth-most populous country is also Asia's most passionate when it comes to football. Attending Indonesian league matches can be an exciting assault on the senses; visually, with tens of thousands of fans bouncing and dancing in unison, and aurally – this writer has not heard a louder crowd than the 88,000 (the official figure, thousands more found a way in after the games had started) inside Jakarta's Gelora Bung Karno Stadium at the 2007 Asian Cup and 2010 AFF Suzuki Cup.

As much as Indonesian fans dislike foreign media going on about hooliganism and violence, there is no doubt that watching football in Indonesia can be an intimidating experience too, in a way that is not the case at Southeast Asian neighbours Thailand, Malaysia or Singapore. Away teams arriving or leaving in armoured personnel carriers is not unheard of; Malaysia requested one for their players for a World Cup qualifier in 2019.

Save Our Soccer, a watchdog organisation operating in the country, said that 78 fans had lost their lives since 1994. There have been high-profile deaths over the years with fans killed, usually outside stadiums. Some of these resulted in major fan groups coming together to promise to make football a safer environment, but not much has changed.

Some of the biggest groups have over 100,000 members. Perhaps the best-known and best-organised – not only in Indonesia but across Asia – is "Jakmania", who follow Persija Jakarta. It gives young, especially working-class, men a sense of belonging in a city with over ten million inhabitants who flock there from all over the country. The organisation is not just confined to chants and cheering but travel and more besides. There has been trouble especially when Persija play bitter rivals

Persib Bandung, the country's second city, who have a group of their own, The Vikings.

In 2016, Persib fan Muhammad Rovi Arrahman was beaten to death by Persija followers. Soon after, despite being banned from the game, Bandung fans were blamed for the death of Persija fan Harun Al Rasyid Lestaluhu. In 2018, Jakarta supporter Haringga Sirila became what was reported to be the seventh victim of this rivalry in six years.

POLITICS

The fans have had their part to play then, but there has been a lack of real leadership in football. Those of us who have paid tribute to the passion and the colour of crowds across the archipelago perhaps paid too little attention to the darker side that sometimes showed itself. What is for sure is that those in charge of the game have not done enough to solve the issues.

The popularity of the game in the country has attracted politicians and other prominent people who would use it for their own ends. The rise of Persija Jakarta started in 1997 when Sutiyoso, a former military general, became governor of the capital. He knew that he needed a way to reach the masses and decided that he would use this club, rebrand it and also encourage rival teams to leave the city. It worked.

In contrary to FIFA rules, there have been a number of members of political parties who have occupied positions of power at the Indonesian federation, known locally as PSSI. Not least was Nurdin Halid, FA chief from 2003 to 2011, who even ran football in this massive country from prison after being jailed on corruption charges in 2007. His eventual ousting in 2011 unleashed chaos and eventually resulted in a rebel federation, league and national team being formed. It was not a surprise that even FIFA, which had long tolerated the problems and regular complaints of foreign players not being paid, lost patience in the end and banned Indonesia in 2015, a suspension that lasted for just over a year.

ENGLAND OR GHANA?

There have been stadium disasters in the past and they usually act as a turning point of sorts for football in those countries. After years of violence and falling attendances in England, the death of 97 Liverpool fans at Hillsborough in 1989 was a nadir. It also led to a series of reforms in British football, which in turn helped push the rise of the English Premier League, now the most lucrative and popular league in the world.

In Ghana in 2001, 126 people died at the Accra Sports Stadium following a game between the country's two biggest clubs, Hearts of Oak and Asante Kotoko. Similarly to recent events in Indonesia, Kotoko fans reacted badly to defeat and were then tear-gassed by police. The stampede to escape had devastating consequences. Observers in Ghana say that the league has never recovered in terms of attendances and interest.

It remains to be seen whether the disaster in Malang will produce real change in Indonesia. There had been some encouraging developments of late. Back in June, the national team qualified for the 2023 Asian Cup for the first time since 2004 (they appeared as co-hosts in 2007). The country has been excited about hosting the Under-20 World Cup in 2023, the biggest international tournament ever to come to the land of many islands. President Widodo had been paying attention to preparations and, amid concerns that FIFA may take away the competition, will be doing even more so now.

Being given hosting rights back in 2019 was seen as a vote of confidence in the country and has been hailed as a new beginning. Investment, both from the public and private sector, has been forthcoming to upgrade stadiums, facilities and infrastructure. Indonesia even threw its hat in the ring to step in and become a late host for the 2023 Asian Cup after China relinquished that right in the summer. There had been vague talk of a bid for the 2034 or 2038 World Cups, either with Australia or fellow Southeast Asian nations such as Thailand, Malaysia and Singapore. Things have been quiet on this front for a while and are likely to remain so.

Rather than World Cups, the priority is for hundreds of families to get answers and justice as they come to terms with their grief and loss. For football, lessons must be learned while the league is paused until late November. "We agreed to form a taskforce, or football transformation taskforce, consisting of the government, FIFA and experts in football, security and stadiums," FA boss Mochamad Iriawan said after a meeting with the world governing body. There will be work to synchronise Indonesian police operating procedures with FIFA regulations, and president Widodo too announced plans to demolish the Kanjuruhan Stadium and have it rebuilt according to safety standards set by FIFA.

Much more must be done and the government has to take the lead and not just in the short-term, to work with the federation, the fans, clubs and other stakeholders. The tragic events of October have come as a shock for Indonesia and, while it won't come as much comfort for the families of the deceased, there has to be a determination, not just that this never happens again, but that it helps to bring real and lasting change to football in this country that loves the game so much.

The world's fourth-most populous country is also Asia's most passionate when it comes to football. Attending Indonesian league matches can be an exciting assault on the senses [but] an intimidating experience too

BELOW: Crush... supporters try to leave the stadium

eyewitness

Ryan Baldi reports

ENGLAND

The road to Doha

Ten years ago, the Football Association rewrote its own rulebook on youth development with the target of winning the 2022 World Cup

England U18s coach ...Neil Ryan

English football has always developed stars. Even in periods of struggle for the national team, some of the game's most feared and revered players have worn the Three Lions on their chest.

But rarely has there been such a proliferation of highly technical, athletic and tactically savvy young players as those currently at Gareth Southgate's disposal. And rarer still has there been the kind of success – at youth and senior level – seen in recent years.

England entered this winter's World Cup in Qatar as one of the pre-competition favourites after a run to a first major tournament final in 55 years at Euro 2020. This, coupled with England's recent triumphs on the world and European youth stages, ought to serve as a ringing endorsement of the Elite Player Performance Plan (EPPP), the rules and guidelines that revolutionised and continue to govern elite youth football in England, a decade on from its introduction. ▸

St George's Park ...the FA's national football centre

Under-19 Euros... England players lift another trophy last summer

Yet for all the developments driven by EPPP, the world of football academies is often viewed – both internally and externally – as somewhat conflicted and shadowy; a system that has at once developed a steady stream of high-achieving and socially conscious players while also creating a culture of too much, too soon and breeding a dangerous disposability of the young people entrusted to it.

Neil Ryan, the England Under-18s' head coach, previously spent nearly 20 years as an academy coach at Manchester United. While acknowledging the many improvements it has instituted, he remembers the scepticism with which EPPP was viewed upon its introduction.

"There was a little bit of wariness about EPPP," he says. "When EPPP came in, I'd been working at United a while. With the history of the club, we were a little bit unique. We were pretty good at developing young players at that point and we had a manager who was invested in young talent and gave them a chance. It took time for the club to really take all the ideas from the Premier League on board and pick what we thought was best and what wasn't.

"It was professionalising the academy side of football clubs and trying to raise standards with regards to the grading of your academy – category one, category two and so on – with facilities, with staffing. It just made a bit of a drive nationwide. You could see each club was beginning to invest good money into the facilities, the coaching, the time spent with the players."

The modern academy system was formalised in the late 1990s. That was when Howard Wilkinson, the former Leeds United and Sunderland manager who was the FA's technical director at the time, devised the Charter for Quality, a wholesale review and rewriting of top-level youth football in England.

Wilkinson studied successful youth programmes from abroad – from Ajax to Barcelona to Sao Paulo – and identified a need for greater "contact time" between players and coaches. The old School of Excellence model meant clubs couldn't formally sign youngsters before the age of 14. The Charter stipulated that any club wishing to run an academy must run teams from the U9 level and up. An educational provision was also

England's recent success – first at youth levels and then with last year's run to the European Championship final – has seen other nations looking more closely at English academies for developmental best practices

Under-17 World Cup...Phil Foden in India in 2017

mandated as professional clubs were empowered to take ultimate responsibility in the development of elite young players, with schools football and local FAs marginalised.

By the early part of the last decade, the Charter for Quality was ripe for an overhaul, and in 2012 EPPP was introduced. With its design led by Ged Roddy, the Premier League's director of football development, EPPP aimed to raise standards in development and welfare by increasing staffing levels, improving educational offerings and instituting dedicated player-care teams within clubs.

"I think the big thing that's come from it is the increase in staffing," Ryan says. "That's helped the players' journey, the increase in coaching hours you get with them. The idea of putting best with best, that was a long-term vision of Ged Roddy's, of being able to put the best players in with the best clubs, the best coaches, the best facilities and trying to raise the all-round standards throughout the whole country.

"Also, a knock-on effect was the improvement of coaching courses, staff development. There became more of an investment into that, with the Premier League investing in young coaches."

And just as Wilkinson sought inspiration from overseas in the 90s, EPPP has encouraged coaches and decision-makers to be curious and farsighted.

"I went over to Spain with one of the development courses I was doing," Ryan says. "I studied Valencia, I looked at Real Sociedad, Athletic Bilbao. You're looking at Spain, who were the standard bearers at that time after the World Cup and the European Championship, with their national team performing at a very, very high level. You ask why. Why have they got players who are maybe more technically skilled in certain positions? What is it about the culture of the game or the culture that's going on there?"

England's recent success – first at youth levels and then with last year's run to the European Championship final – has seen other nations looking more closely at English academies for developmental best practices. The production of technical players comfortable in possession and under pressure, regardless of position and physical size, was previously seen as a strength of nations like Spain and a great developmental failing in England. With the likes of Phil Foden, Mason Mount and Bukayo Saka starring for club and country, that is no longer an accusation that can be levelled at England. Ryan credits the country's biggest clubs with driving this skill evolution.

"The top clubs, who are looking to develop top players to come through and to ultimately play for international teams, they're the ones who should provide at the highest level, because of the infrastructure, the facilities, the investment, the recruitment of the best players," he says. "You look at clubs like Chelsea, Manchester City, Manchester United, Arsenal, Liverpool, Tottenham – they are providing players for the national team. Other clubs are, too, but the big clubs are the big providers of pathways for players into the national teams, and technical emphasis is high. There are high criteria that, technically, they can all handle the ball, control games, play out from the goalkeeper and maintain possession."

But no one should be under the illusion that EPPP has created a perfect world. Its introduction was met with the most resistance from the outset from clubs lower down the food chain due to its fixed-compensation system. Every player within an

EPPP LEGACY

- *European Under-17 Championship 2014*
- *European Under-17 Championship 2017 runners-up*
- *Under-20 World Cup 2017*
- *European Under-19 Championship 2017*
- *Under-17 World Cup 2017*
- *Euro 2020 runners-up*
- *European Under-19 Championship 2022*

academy is assigned a set value, based on the category grade of the academy and the player's time within it. Not only is the notion of placing a price tag on children as young as eight deeply unsavoury to the outside eye, many within the game feel it has tilted the balance of power even further in favour of the richest clubs, who are able to scoop up and stockpile talent.

And then there is the personal and emotional cost necessitated by the academy system in its current state. As many as 12,000 children are registered to professional clubs' academies. Estimates vary but it is accepted that as little as 0.5 per cent go on to make a living from the game. For the rest, there is only heartbreak. There is a greater degree of aftercare for those who don't make the grade than ever before, but there is vast anecdotal evidence to suggest that it is still not enough. It is imperative that academies and the bodies that govern them do more to ensure childhood is not lost in pursuit of an improbable dream.

"Players come into clubs at nine years old," Ryan says. "It's a long journey – ten to 12 years of academy life. That was never the case in previous years, before the advancement of academies. Players would have more play, more free time playing grassroots football, Sunday football, school football. It wasn't as professional. At Manchester United, [academy programme advisor] Tony Whelan was the cultural architect of childhood and retaining that feeling of fun and freedom of expression and being able to play street football, replacing what kids would have done in the past. A lot of other clubs around the country are doing that as well because they understand the importance of that.

"There have been examples of it being a bit too professional, of players agreeing to be at clubs and people think they're a signed player at the age of ten or 12. That's not the case. They're registered, but there's a long way to go and they're nowhere near the finished article.

"Very few make the first team. Your job is to get them to the next step – whether that's to go to another good club lower down, or they go out of the game to non-league and they go into a different career path.

"You need to have an exit strategy, a plan, and parents need to be aware of that. You don't want to crush the dream, so you have to be careful about how often you say: 'It's not going to work for you.' But you just have to make sure that, when that happens, you're there to support them."

England's success at youth and senior level is testament to the daily work done on academy training pitches and the advancements ushered in by EPPP a decade ago. No matter how Southgate's talented young side fare at the World Cup in Qatar, though, a spotlight must remain on the inadequacies of what is still a flawed system.

Ryan Baldi is the author of The Dream Factory: Inside the Make-or-Break World of Football's Academies

Under-20 World Cup ...Fikayo Tomori with the U20 World Cup trophy in 2017

> "There are high criteria that, technically, the players can all handle the ball, control games, play out from the goalkeeper and maintain possession"
>
> **Neil Ryan, England Under-18s coach**

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Jane Purdon (MAY)

The second book in the series, to be published in late spring next year, will be written by Jane Purdon, former chief executive of Women in Football, telling of her trailblazing role in the women's game, the amazing Lionesses summer that saw them win the European Championship, and the effect since on the state of the game as we go into the Women's World Cup next summer.

Andy Hamilton (SEP)

Autumn 2023 will see the publication of the third book, by comedian, TV and radio writer and novelist Andy Hamilton, who grew up just a few streets from Stamford Bridge. It will document his boyhood love and support for the club that he came to question as disappointment grew with maturity at events at Chelsea, both on and off the pitch.

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Steve Menary reports

CATALONIA

Football and Catalan nationalism

The red and yellow striped flags of Catalonia that once proliferated on the balconies in Barcelona have reduced; the ensign still flies at state institutions and is draped outside some flats but, since the botched attempt at declaring independence in 2017, Catalonia's relationship with Spain has been recalibrated in the political and sporting arenas.

Spain's socialist prime minister Pedro Sanchez has taken a more moderate approach to the issue than his conservative predecessor Mariano Rajoy, while on the sporting front Catalans benefit from an influential position in the national football association, the RFEF (Royal Federation of Spanish Football).

Joan Soteras, who was elected president of the Catalan Football Federation (FCF) in 2018 and re-elected in May, is a vice president at the RFEF, where he leads two influential committees.

In March, the Spanish national team even played a friendly in Barcelona – its first game in Catalonia in 18 years – albeit at Espanyol's Cornella-El Prat stadium rather than Barca's Camp Nou, where they beat Albania 2-1.

The calls for independence that, back in 2012, saw lobby group Plataforma ProSeleccions Esportives Catalanes ask the presidents of Catalonia's

12 biggest clubs to sign an agreement supporting the idea of going alone are unlikely to be made again.

Plataforma had already secured international recognition for minority sports in Catalonia, such as darts and korfball, and supported the idea of a national league. That was immediately scuppered when Miguel Garcia, the nationalist president of CE L'Hospitalet, refused to sign, but the plan was always unworkable anyway.

Like the role of Catalan's politicians, Catalonia's presence in La Liga has also been strengthened by Girona – a part of the Dubai-controlled City Football Group – re-joining Barca and Espanyol in the top flight this season.

These three clubs are further away than ever from the rest of that putative Catalan league. CE Sabadell and Gimnastic de Tarragona languish in the third tier and UE Llagostera and AE Prat in the fourth. CF Badalona, UE Sant Andreu and CE L'Hospitalet are all in the fifth tier, and CF Reus Deportiu folded in 2018-19.

As Barcelona were also core drivers behind the proposed European Super League project, any thoughts of a Catalan league – regardless of the wider politics involved – are more impossible than ever.

The focus of patriotic Catalan football fervour has been left to the region's national team, *Seleccio Catalana*, whose presence has weakened since 2017.

The FCF was formed in 1900 and the *Seleccio* played their first international friendly versus another country in 1912 against France, losing 7-0 in Paris before winning the return in Barcelona 1-0.

Between 1915 and 1926, the Catalan XI competed in the inter-regional Copa Princep d'Asturie. Games were also played against club teams but the international focus remained on friendlies, with Brazil famously vanquished in 1934.

After the Spanish Civil War ended in 1939, Spain's new leader General Franco imposed numerous restrictions on Spain's regions, including Catalonia, where the language and flag were suppressed.

Some *Seleccio* games continued, including a famous 3-1 victory over Spain in 1947, but matches were scarce until Franco's death in 1975, which was marked by a game with the Soviet Union. A Catalan side featuring Barcelona's Dutch legends Johan Cruyff and Johan Neeskens as guests played in a 1-1 draw, with the latter scoring for the home side at Camp Nou.

After Franco's death, Catalonia and some other autonomous Spanish regions, including the Basque Country and Galicia, began to regularly play friendlies against FIFA members. The Catalan XI has been good enough to beat the likes of Ecuador, Chile, Colombia, Nigeria and Yugoslavia and, in 2002, lost 3-1 to a Brazil side featuring Ronaldo, Ronaldinho and Cafu that went on to win the World Cup just two months later.

In December 2007, the political representatives of Catalonia, the Basque Country and Galicia signed an agreement calling for wider recognition. The signing took place in front of 40,000 fans at Athletic Bilbao's San Mames stadium before the Basque Country drew 1-1 with Catalonia. The visitors' goal that day was scored by Espanyol's Sergio Garcia who, with 16 caps and nine goals, tops both charts for Catalonia.

BOTTOM: In action... Catalan players during their recent clash with Jamaica

BELOW: FCF president... Joan Soteras

After the signing of what became known as the San Mames accord in Bilbao, Josep-Lluis Carod Rovira, the then-vice president in Catalonia's autonomous government, said: "We are not here against anybody. We are here in favour of sport, in favour of our countries as sporting countries. We are here because we wish to compete with each other and with all the other countries of the world; we do not want politics to limit sporting relationships."

In 2009, Jordi Casals – a trusted associate of current Barca chief Joan Laporta – took over as FCF president and recruited as manager the iconic Cruyff, who immediately engineered a famous 4-2 win over Argentina.

Casals had grand plans for attracting international teams to Barcelona for training camps and matches with the *Seleccio* but he soon fell out with the FCF and left, as did Cruyff, whose final game in January 2013 also proved a divisive turning point.

The game was shifted from the spiritual home of Catalan football at Camp Nou to Espanyol's smaller Cornella-El Prat stadium and the selection policy changed.

Rather than select players from smaller Catalan sides such as Girona, Gimnastic and CE Sabadell, Cruyff played with nine Barcelona players, including Gerard Pique, Carles Puyol, Jordi Alba and Sergio Busquets, and two from Espanyol. In what should have been a final goodbye to the Barcelona legend, a crowd of just 27,234 turned up at the Cornella-El Prat.

The San Mames accord has achieved little and since Cruyff's departure fixtures have dwindled and moved away from Barcelona altogether. The win over Argentina had been for the newly-created Catalonia International trophy, which was played annually during La Liga's mid-season break but was discontinued in 2016 after a defeat on penalties to Tunisia.

In the aftermath of the bid for independence, games could have been a potential flashpoint and the *Seleccio* did not play again until March 2019, when Venezuela were edged out 2-1.

Soteras has been a moderate president. Any talk of trying to join FIFA – which would have been impossible anyway under current rules – has been dropped, but the onset of COVID-19 disrupted games.

The FCF had agreed a deal to play Jamaica before the pandemic struck and honoured this in May 2022 with Catalonia thumping the Caribbean side 6-0 in Girona in their first game in three years.

As the matches shifted outside Camp Nou, the crowds have dwindled. Less than 13,000 saw Espanyol winger Javi Puado clinch a late winner over Venezuela in 2019. Sergio, who was born in L'Hospitalet and played 15 times for the *Seleccio*, took over as Cadiz manager in 2022 but his first game against Jamaica this year attracted just over 6,000 fans.

Winners...Marc Bartra lifts the Catalunya-Jamaica trophy

Soteras and the FCF are in a difficult position. A big game featuring the best Catalan players, such as Barca defender Jordi Alba and his team-mate Sergio Busquets, against the likes of Argentina or Brazil could potentially fill Camp Nou, but bringing sides of that calibre over would incur a fee of $1 million or more.

> **Any talk of trying to join FIFA – which would have been impossible anyway under current rules – has been dropped**

"At the end, it's an exhibition game," says an FCF spokesperson. "There are a lot of feelings on the pitch but it's a friendly and we will probably lose money – and that's the clubs' money."

Games had been played in December during La Liga's winter break, but the FCF now plans to play all matches in official FIFA windows. That means the *Seleccio* would be deprived of Catalan players in the Spanish squad such as Alba and Busquets. But despite this seeming downgrading of the fixture, the Catalan XI is impressively strong.

Gerard Deulofeu, now playing in Italy for Udinese, played against Jamaica and scored a hat-trick. Former Barcelona centre-back Marc Bartra – now in Turkey with Trabzonspor – also played and scored, as did Puado and Club Brugge's Ferran Jutgla.

Marc Cucurella, who shortly after the game was bought by Chelsea from Brighton & Hove Albion for a reported initial fee of £58m, was also among the starting XI at Girona's 11,810-capacity Estadi Montilivi. But Cucurella is hoping to become a regular in the Spain squad at left-back, so could be unavailable for Catalonia's next fixture, which should be in March 2023.

Still, Soteras says: "We have made efforts from home to have a powerful rival. In Catalonia we have good candidates to be summoned."

The venue will be Girona, Sabadell or at Espanyol's stadium. The opponents have yet to be pinned down, but the FCF's sponsors and broadcasters want a team inside the top 50 of the FIFA rankings.

European sides have been typically difficult to attract and the next opponents are likely to come from Africa or South America again. Another potential candidate is one that a few years ago was unthinkable.

"It would be very interesting if we played Madrid," adds the FCF spokesperson. "They would have a good team. It would be fun to organise. We have good relations with the Madrid and Spanish federations. There are a lot of feelings there but it's football."

For the federations, that fixture might only be football but for fans the game would, despite the cooling political ardour in Catalonia, mean a whole lot more.

Hat-trick hero... Gerard Deulofeu in action versus Jamaica

ZÉRO À HÉRO

A Ballon d'Or, a fifth Champions League trophy, and now main role at Qatar 2022 – how Karim Benzema went from the international wilderness to World Cup centre stage

Words: Nick Bidwell

The latest recipient of the Ballon d'Or, Real Madrid and France striker Karim Benzema has every reason to be enjoying playing at the 2022 Qatar World Cup with all the doe-eyed enthusiasm of a rookie.

While the Lyon-born 34-year-old has won an incredible 23 domestic, European and world titles in a glorious 13-season stint with Real Madrid, his national team career has offered comparatively few highs. In the first three major international tournaments he played in (Euro 2008, Euro 2012 and World Cup 2014), he sparkled only intermittently and for six long years (2015-2021), the powers-that-be at the Gallic federation declared him *persona non grata*.

Barred from the national team for his alleged role in a sex-tape blackmail affair, Benzema should have been an automatic choice to spearhead his nation's Russia 2018 campaign. As the best French striker of his generation and a proven marksman for global heavyweights Real Madrid, his presence in Russia would have arguably rendered *Les Bleus* even more formidable.

What a waste, then, that KB9 had to make other plans for the summer of 2018, jetting off to holiday in the Miami sunshine. What a squandering of talent and high-end experience; he had just won his fourth Champions League with Real and had finished the 2017-18 campaign with five goals in that competition, including his side's opener in the 3-1 victory over Liverpool in the final.

After *Les Bleus* saw off Croatia to clinch their second world title in 2018, Benzema was quick to offer his social media congratulations, uploading a photo of the celebrating squad accompanied by: "Bravo boys, World champions." A year later, in an interview with *France-Football* magazine, he explained how he had dealt with the setback: "I tell myself that it was meant to be. Regrets? Yes, I did have some at the time because, you know, it might have been me. But on the whole, I don't have regrets, no. I play for Real Madrid and I've won everything. That masks the disappointment."

FIFA
2018
FFF
UKRAINE - FRANCE
4 SEPTEMBRE 2021
19

France comeback... Benzema's *Les Bleus* return has so far been a resounding success

His prolonged spell as an international pariah certainly did him no harm at club level. While frozen out by the French Football Federation (FFF), he amassed no fewer than 145 competitive goals for Real. During his last three seasons as an international undesirable (2018-19, 2019-20 and 2020-21), he was particularly prolific, scoring 87 goals in all competitions. At a time of repeated success with Real – 12 trophies, including two La Liga titles, three Champions Leagues and three Club World Cups – he could afford to put national team thoughts on the back-burner.

France may have had no time for him, but Real indubitably did; over the last few years at the Bernabeu, he has carved out a niche for himself as a *Los Blancos* legend, backing up his strong performances with all manner of statistical achievements. In February 2019, he became only the fourth player to score 60 goals in the Champions League (for Lyon and Real combined), while later that year he overtook the great Ferenc Puskas as Real Madrid's sixth-most prolific La Liga goalscorer (with 157 goals in 327 outings).

In March 2020, he made his 500th appearance for Real, one of just 14 players to have reached that milestone. And barely pausing for breath, he also went on to surpass Puskas as the fifth-highest all-time marksman in Real history with 243 strikes to his name. October 2020 saw him net his 250th goal in all competitions for the All-Whites – certainly not the numbers of an international has-been.

These days ranked second in Real's all-time goalscoring rankings (trailing Cristiano Ronaldo by around 120), as well as being unrivalled in the club's historical assist charts, Benzema has made himself an institution within an institution. Not bad at all for someone who, not so long ago, served as the *bête noire* of Real Madrid fans. Throughout the 2017-18 season, he was relentlessly booed at the Bernabeu, targeted for not scoring enough.

When analysing Benzema's renaissance of recent times, it's impossible to ignore the role of raw anger in the process. He will go to his

> "Regrets? Yes, I did have some at the time because, you know, it might have been me"
>
> Benzema on missing out on the 2018 World Cup victory

Timeline

MAY 15, 2004
Watches from the bench as France win the European U17 Championship. The striker scored one goal in two appearances en route to the final.

AUG 15, 2006
Makes his France U21 debut against Belgium, going on to score no goals in five caps for the team.

NOV 9, 2006
Receives his first senior call-up for France by coach Raymond Domenech, but is forced to withdraw with a thigh injury.

DEC 2006
Rejects an approach from the Algerian federation to switch his international allegiance to the nation of his parents.

MAR 28, 2007
Makes his France debut in a friendly against Austria, coming on as a half-time substitute for Djibril Cisse and scoring the only goal of the game.

Mentor...Benzema and Zinedine Zidane

grave insisting that his national team "ban" was an injustice, that he was wronged by the FFF. In an interview with Spanish sports daily *Marca* in 2016, Benzema – whose roots are Algerian – accused Didier Deschamps of "bowing to the pressure of a racist part of France" and two years later, he reacted to a suggestion from federation chief Noel Le Graet that "it is over with *Les Bleus* for him".

"Mr Le Graet," wrote Benzema on Twitter. "I ask that you forget me and please leave me alone. France are world champions and that is the essential, the rest is futile. Thank you."

As recently as November 2019, Le Graet reiterated that Benzema's national team "adventure was over". The Madrid star instantly saw red.

Euro 2020 warm-up ...Benzema made his international return in a friendly against Wales in June 2021

"Noel, I thought you weren't interfering with the coach's decisions," exclaimed Benzema on Twitter. "I and I alone will end my international career."

The moral of the story? Never tell a proud top-class sportsman that he's over the hill. Like Benzema, he will pull out all the stops to prove you wrong.

A sense of grievance against the FFF was not the only factor in his revival.

OCT 13, 2007
Scores his first competitive goals for France, netting a brace in a 6-0 win against the Faroe Islands in qualifying for Euro 2008.

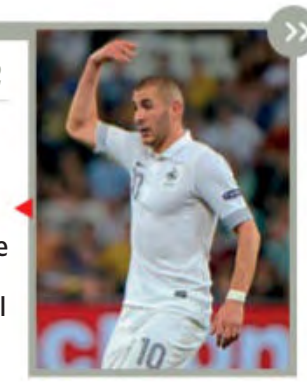
MAY 28, 2008
Named in France's 23-man squad for Euro 2008, his first major tournament. Goes on to play two matches but France finish bottom of their group.

OCT 14, 2009
Scores in France's World Cup qualifying victory over Austria in October 2009 – his final cap under Domenech.

MAY 11, 2010
Left out of France's preliminary 30-man squad for the World Cup after an underwhelming first season at Real Madrid.

AUG 11, 2010
Returns to the national team under new coach Laurent Blanc, coming off the bench in a friendly defeat to Norway.

MAY 29, 2012
Named in the squad for Euro 2012, going on to pick up two assists in four games before France's quarter-final exit to eventual champions Spain.



Greater maturity came into the equation too, as did a thirst for more responsibility. For years, Benzema had played second fiddle to Ronaldo both in the Real attack and the hierarchy of influence at the club. Yet all was to markedly change when the Portuguese superstar surprisingly left for Juventus in the summer of 2018.

The mantle of predator-in-chief would duly pass to Benzema. Instead of mainly concentrating on work as a false nine and decoy runs, he now found himself in his favourite position of leader of the line. After so long in a peripheral role at the Bernabeu, he initially had problems relearning his old centre-forward lines. However the old spearhead instincts soon fired up again, so much so that it often seemed that Real were composed of Benzema and ten willing accomplices.

With his confidence boosted and efficiency off the charts, he naturally graduated to the status of talisman; a sort of Ronaldo-like billing, but without the self-regard and the histrionics. "When Cristiano was at Real Madrid, I had a different role," Karim told the Portuguese sports paper *A Bola* in August. "He helped me a lot and I played more of a supporting role. When you have a team-mate who scores 50 goals a season, you have to adapt. When he left I had to step up. I knew that from day one it was down to me to win games."

As for his physical wellbeing, a calendar shorn of international football has been of huge benefit to him. Without the travelling, regular season national team fixtures and tournament demands, he has been able to stay fresh, lucky enough to have more recuperation time and longer summer holidays. In contrast to the vast majority of stellar performers, he does not have the same excessive amount of miles on the clock.

> "There's a little more than friendship between us. It's a little like family. I call him my big brother. I forget he's my coach"
>
> **Benzema on Zinedine Zidane**

Even at the veteran stage of his career he remains sprite and full of vim. Although theoretically an old-timer, the advancing years are hardly holding him back. He enjoyed the most productive season of his career last season, scoring no fewer than 44 goals in 46 games in all competitions, including 27 in La Liga – cruising to the "Pichichi" crown as the championship's top marksman – and contributing a whopping 15 goals to Real Madrid's Champions League triumph – a first in four years.

The longer last season went on, the stronger Benzema became, especially prominent in the Champions League. Absolutely unstoppable, he notched a hat-trick in a last-16 second-leg victory over Paris Saint-Germain, struck another treble against Chelsea in the quarter-finals and added three more in the semi-final defenestration of Manchester City. His ten strikes in the Champions League last spring were good enough to equal Cristiano Ronaldo's record for scoring the most knockout phase goals in a single season.

It speaks volumes that five of Benzema's

UEFA Nations League winner...Kylian Mbappe holds the 2020-21 trophy with Benzema

OCT 11, 2013
Ends a 1,222-minute international goal drought by scoring in a 6-0 friendly victory against Australia, his first France goal since June 2012.

NOV 19, 2013
Scores in the second leg of the 2014 World Cup qualification play-off against Ukraine as France recover from a 2-0 first-leg deficit.

JUN 15, 2014
Makes his World Cup debut in France's 3-0 win against Honduras, scoring two goals and playing a role in the other.

JUL 4, 2014
Plays 90 minutes as France are knocked out by the eventual winners for the second tournament in a row, this time to Germany in the quarter-finals.

OCT 8, 2015
Scores twice in a friendly against Armenia in what would be his last appearance for France for almost six years.

Ballon d'Or winner ...Benzema holds the 2022 award

goals in the latter stages of the 2021-22 Champions League came in the final quarter-hour of regulation play or in extra-time. In his first season as regular captain (often standing in for Marcelo), he truly led from the front, embodying the spirit of a team who never knew when they were defeated.

Another key factor in the Benzema revival was former Real Madrid coach Zinedine Zidane. The pair were very much natural allies: they were both born in France to Algerian parents, had similar personalities – inscrutable and not exactly talkative – and both were teenage French prodigies. Zidane knew exactly what made Benzema tick and was delighted to take on the brief of mentor and protector.

Whenever Benzema was on the receiving end of criticism, Zidane would rush to his corner, extolling the forward's work ethic, selflessness and creativity. For Zizou, Benzema was the ideal team man.

"He [Zidane] always spoke to me with sincerity," revealed Benzema in an interview this year with French daily *L'Equipe*. "If I was good, he'd tell me and if I wasn't, he'd tell me too. And he wouldn't go about it with kid gloves. There's a little more than friendship between us. It's a little like family. I call him my big brother. I forget he's my coach. We discuss things. We meet up. And that's outside of football. On the pitch, he gave me great confidence and placed me in the best conditions possible. I was able to flourish, to raise my game even more."

In May 2021 came the bombshell announcement that Benzema was to be included in the French squad for the forthcoming European Championship. Most observers of the Gallic game had assumed there was no way back for him, a dead-end consequence of his verbal jousts with federation supremo Le Graet and head coach Deschamps' stubborn character. If ever there was an out-of-the-blue rapprochement, this was it.

"I don't want to go into detail about the discussion he and I had," declared Deschamps when quizzed on Benzema's recall by a reporter from French TV show *Telefoot*. "But it was very, very long and there was a lot of toing and froing. What is important is today and tomorrow. The fact that he did not come back before did not stop us having good results. Things have changed. Me and certainly on Karim's side too, of course."

Thus far, Benzema's second act with *Les Bleus* has proved a resounding success. His four goals in four starts at Euro 2020 was arguably the one positive note in a disappointing French campaign and he was also instrumental in France's coronation at the 2020-21 Nations League, on the scoresheet in final four wins over Belgium and Spain.

Already on the same wavelength as fellow France star Kylian Mbappe, it's almost as if Benzema never went away. Say it in hushed tones. National team exile has worked out well for the current world number one.

Goal...Benzema scores in the Nations League final

MAY 18, 2021
Recalled to France's 26-man Euro 2020 squad, making his comeback in a 3-0 friendly win against Wales two weeks later.

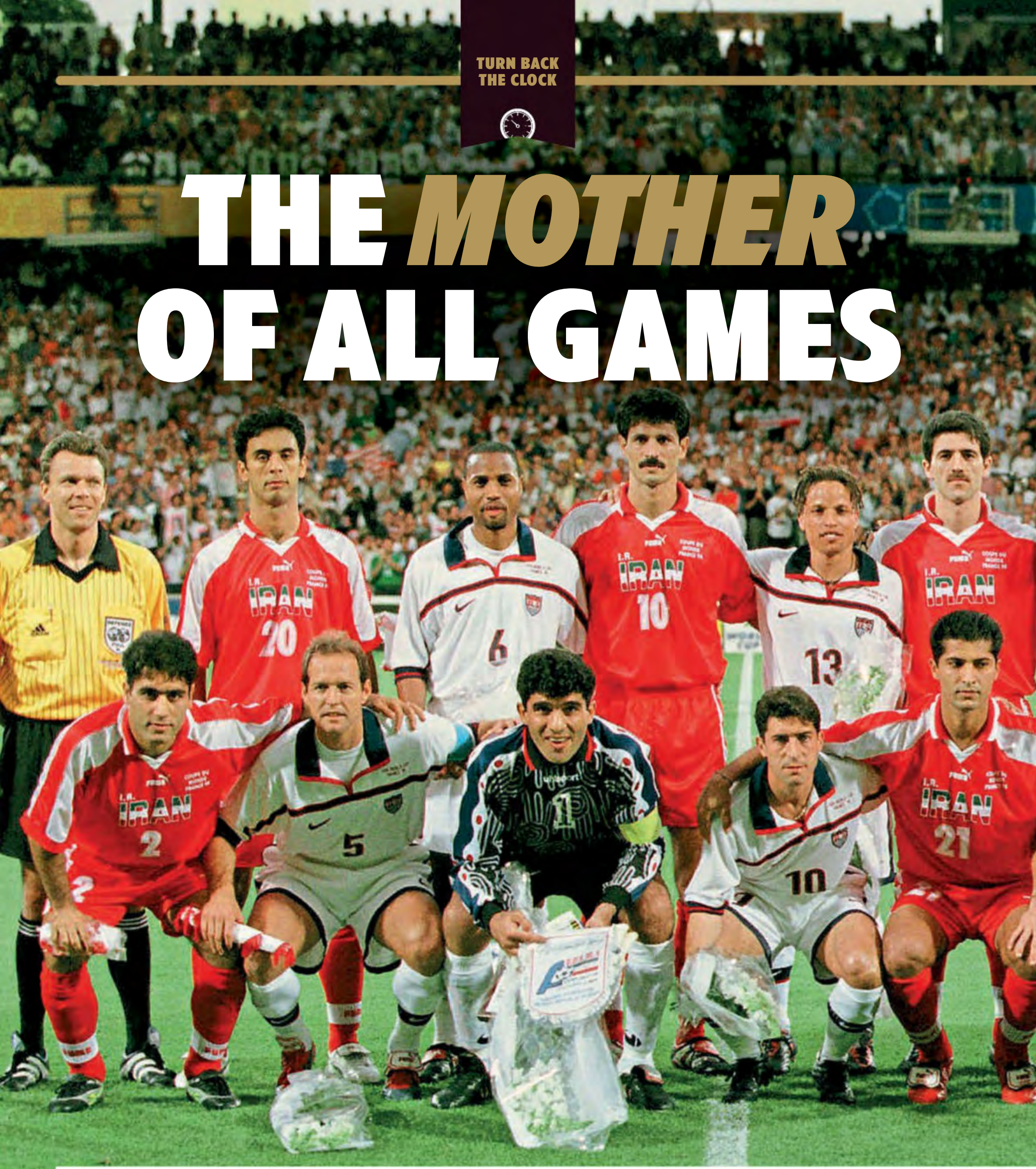
JUN 28, 2021
Scores a brace as France lose to Switzerland in the last 16. Ends the tournament with four goals and the tournament's bronze boot.

OCT 7, 2021
Scores as France defeat Belgium 3-2 in the UEFA Nations League semi-finals, before scoring again in the final win against Spain three days later.

NOV 13, 2021
Moves into fifth place on France's list of all-time top scorers – ahead of David Trezeguet – after scoring twice in an 8-0 win over Kazakhstan.

OCT 17, 2022
Becomes the fifth Frenchman – following Raymond Kopa, Michel Platini, Jean-Pierre Papin and Zinedine Zidane – to win the Ballon d'Or award.

THE *MOTHER* OF ALL GAMES



At Qatar 2022, the United States will meet Iran in the World Cup, 24 years after playing in one of the most politically-charged matches in the tournament's history

Words: Chris Evans

As Sepp Blatter unfurled the rolled up paper and held it up to the camera, the world winced in unison. The FIFA president, pokerfaced despite the significance of what the small blue ball he'd opened contained, read out the country clearly: Iran.

It was the draw for the 1998 World Cup and the Asian nation had just been put in Group F alongside Yugoslavia and European champions Germany. Yet it was their pairing with the final group opponent that was setting pulses racing.

The draw meant Iran would take on the USA in a match quickly dubbed "the mother of all games" by US Soccer Federation president Alan Rothenberg.

The countries had been at loggerheads since the Iranian revolution's overthrowing of the pro-American Shah in 1979. There had been no formal diplomatic relations since 1980 and the USA had placed Iran under a trade embargo, while the 1979-81

Emotion...Hamid Reza Estili celebrates scoring Iran's opening goal

Peace gesture...USA and Iranian players exchange flowers

Iran hostage crisis saw 52 Americans held for more than 14 months in Tehran.

"I was coming at it as an American kid who grew up in the suburbs and looked at Russia as the evil empire and the big enemy, but in the same way it was like that playing in the World Cup against Iran," says USA defender Alexi Lalas in new book *How to Win the World Cup: Secrets and Insights from International Football's Top Managers*.

"What they represented at that time to a 20-something who had been growing up in the '70s in the United States...was about to play out on the football field."

The two would go head-to-head in Lyon on June 21, 1998, in perhaps the most politically charged World Cup match since East and West Germany faced off in 1974.

As soon as the draw was made, the football fraternities of both nations were whipped into frenzy, with the fixture dominating news headlines and the possible ramifications of the match discussed at great lengths. The six months that followed became as much about smoothing diplomatic relations as finding a way to outmanoeuvre each other on the pitch.

The first hurdle to overcome was negotiating FIFA protocol, which dictated that Iran – as the fixture's designated "Team B" – would have to approach USA's players for the pre-match handshakes, a move Iran's Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei forbade. To avoid an awkward standoff, the Americans approached the Iranians and bouquets of flowers were exchanged instead, before a joint-team photo was taken to portray a unified message.

While that political hot potato was successfully sidestepped, there were security concerns off the pitch too. Rumours of a terrorist group planning a protest in the stands during the game were rife, with the possibility of pro and anti-Iranian congregations clashing.

Troublemakers had to be identified, controversial banners removed or stopped from appearing on TV broadcasts, while 150 armed French riot police were stationed around the stands in case a planned pitch invasion took place. One group of 3,000 political activists were even surrounded and isolated during the match in an attempt to quell the sound of their dissent. The entire match was surrounded by concerns that the situation could boil over at any moment.

It's strange then, that more than 20 years after the game was successfully marshalled, then-USA boss Steve Sampson says he has regrets about being overly diplomatic.

"If I was to do it all over again, I'd make it more political," Sampson admits in *How to Win the World Cup*. "I'd use history as motivation for my players that they [Iran] held American citizens captive for the longest period of time and are literally one of the greatest enemies ever faced by the United States.

"I wanted to make it all about the football and de-politicise the whole event because, for me, our football was on display. Whereas for the Iranians, it was their politics on display."

Sampson is pretty matter of fact in his assessment of where he believes his US team fell short as they slipped to a 2-1 defeat at the Stade de Gerland. While they'd tried to play down the politics behind the match both publicly and behind closed doors, Iran's federation had used the historic tensions to motivate their players.

Lalas agrees: "They used the relationship and the history and the propaganda, if you will, to motivate themselves and we didn't match it with our performance.

"From a practical perspective, this was three points. When the draw came out, we said that we're getting three points against Iran, boom, put that in the bag. If we don't do that, there will be big problems. Obviously, we didn't."

> "A politician from the Iranian government came down the locker room, collected all the passports of the Iranians and said: 'You lose this, you'll never return home'"
>
> **Steve Sampson, USA coach**

Unbeknown to Sampson, Lalas and the rest of the US side at the time, the political rhetoric in the Iranian dressing room aimed to prise open old wounds – leaving the Stars and Stripes' more liberal approach looking feeble in comparison.

That's not to say that USA's players didn't play their part in a blood-and-thunder encounter. But, after a tight first half where neither side gave an inch, Hamid Reza Estili broke the deadlock shortly before the break with a header that narrowly evaded the reach of American goalkeeper Kasey Keller.

Estili's goal had given something for Iran to defend, but the players were soon to find out quite how much was on the line.

"I later found out that at half-time of that game, when we were losing, a top politician from the Iranian government came down the locker room, collected all the passports of the Iranians and said: 'You lose this, you'll never return home'," says Sampson. "I only know this because I met with [Iran] coach [Jalal] Talebi after the World Cup, so it's true."

While Talebi wasn't the main instigator behind the threat, the coach who ahead of the match had claimed: "I'm not a political man, I'm a sportsman," was well-versed in how to get the most out of his Persian stars.

Talebi lived in North California – the same state as Sampson – so may not have felt the full weight of the threat aimed at his players himself, but he knew triumphing above the nation he now called home was more important than even qualifying from the group.

But it was the USA who were in the ascendency for much of the second half as they pressed forwards trying to find an equaliser, denied by a resolute Iranian back line and the woodwork.

Then, with six minutes of normal time remaining, Mehdi Mahdavikia broke clear and poked home a right-footed effort to double Iran's lead and send their fans into raptures.

Sampson claims his side "dominated from start to finish" and were punished for their "infancy at international level" after being caught short on the counter attack. And while Brian McBride's header halved the arrears late on, the USA didn't have enough to avoid a chastening defeat.

"I achieved what I wanted to do, which was to make it a football event, not a political event, but the Iranians did exactly what they wanted to do," Sampson concedes.

"They made it a political event, so much so that after they beat us, every single one of the players was awarded a new home in Iran, paid for by the Iranian government. That would never have happened in the United States."

Despite the result, both Iran and the USA failed to qualify from the group, with nether side managing to score against either Yugoslavia or Germany. But while the USA, who'd reached the last 16 of their home World Cup four years earlier, saw finishing bottom of the group with no points as a big failure, Iran had achieved what they'd aimed to at the tournament.

"The fact is, they came into this World Cup not really caring about getting into the second round – all they cared about was beating the United States," Sampson adds. "They didn't care about their first match against Yugoslavia, all they cared about what their match against us."

Victory in the "mother of all games" had become more than just three points and arguably even paved the way for a softening in relations between the two nations, with a friendly between the countries organised 18 months later.

A 1-1 draw that day helped the Americans claw back some respect, and while the animosity between the countries isn't as high as it was at the turn of the millennium, when they meet again in Qatar this winter there's sure to be some spice.

Maybe this time, the balls will fall in the USA's favour.

How to Win the World Cup: Secrets and Insights from International Football's Top Managers by Chris Evans is out now

BELOW LEFT: USA coach...Steve Sampson speaks to the press after the defeat to Iran

BELOW: Battle...Iran icon Ali Daei holds off USA's Eddie Pope (L) and Frankie Hejduk

O FENOMENO

How Ronaldo fired Brazil to the 2002 World Cup

Words: Ryan Baldi

The story of Ronaldo's 2002 World Cup begins four years earlier, at the Chateau de Grande Romaine in Lesigny, 20 miles southeast of Paris, France.

It is the early afternoon of July 12, 1998. Ronaldo eats lunch and retreats to his room in the luxury, secluded hotel that the Brazilian Football Confederation has selected as the national team's base for the World Cup.

Ronaldo is apparently relaxed enough to take a nap despite being hours away from what ought to be his coronation as the king of world football, confirming his status as not only the radiant future of the game but its unstoppable present too. At 9pm local time, the World Cup final will kick off.

He is 21 years old and just a year removed from a world-record transfer from Barcelona to Internazionale. He has met – exceeded, if it is possible – every expectation that greeted his move, finishing his debut season in Italy with 34 goals and a UEFA Cup winners' medal.

There was little doubt ahead of the World Cup in France that Ronaldo was the best player on the planet. His performances at the tournament have only rubber-stamped that assertion. After netting four goals to drive Brazil to a final showdown with the host nation, his balletic dribbles, bursting speed and the inevitability of his finishing have become as recognisable hallmarks of Ronaldo's as his shaven head and gap-toothed smile.

He goes to sleep, ready to manifest a dream. He wakes, shortly after, surrounded by doctors and frightened team-mates.

HIJACKED CORONATION

It was the midfielder Leonardo who later explained what had happened.

After falling asleep, the striker had begun to convulse. His body shook violently, uncontrollably, and saliva frothed at the corner of his mouth. Roberto Carlos, his room-mate, discovered him and, terrified, raised the alarm by banging on the doors of the nearest rooms, screaming for help. Edmundo rushed in from the adjoining room and Cesar Sampaio was the first to approach Ronaldo, reaching into the fitting superstar's mouth to ensure his airways were clear. The team doctor was next to arrive, but then Ronaldo fell back into a peaceful slumber.

That evening, when the Brazil squad travelled to the Stade de France in Saint-Denis, Ronaldo was not aboard the team coach. He'd been taken to the Lilas clinic in Paris for tests. There was confusion in the stadium and around the watching world as Edmundo's name was initially listed on the team sheet where Ronaldo's was expected. Ronaldo arrived at the stadium less than an hour before kick-off, clutching documents confirming he'd been given a clean

9

bill of health. He pleaded with coach Mario Zagallo to be allowed to play.

An updated team sheet bore Ronaldo's name. But the player wearing No.9 for Brazil was a ghost of the striker who'd lit up the tournament. Brazil lost 3-0. Ronaldo's coronation was hijacked by Zinedine Zidane, who scored twice for France and would go on to claim the first of his three FIFA World Player of the Year Awards.

BROKEN BODY

Although Ronaldo suffered no further mystery malfunctions, his body continued to fail him. In 1999, 59 minutes into a 6-0 win over Lecce, he suffered his first serious knee injury. He underwent surgery and returned to action in just five months, racing to be fit to face Lazio in the Coppa Italia.

Six minutes into his comeback game, he attempted a stepover on the edge of the penalty area, and then crumpled to the ground in agony. He'd suffered a complete rupture of his knee-cap tendons. He missed the rest of the 1999-2000 season, the entirety of the following campaign and returned in 2001-02 to make just 16 total appearances before the end of the season.

Four goals in his final four Serie A games of the season suggested that Ronaldo had the sharpness to justify his inclusion in Brazil's squad for the 2002 World Cup. And he was a welcome

Heartbroken...Ronaldo reacts to Brazil's defeat in the 1998 WC final

Team-mates...Juninho celebrates after Ronaldo's goal against Costa Rica in 2002

ABOVE: Turkey goal ...Ronaldo athletically converts Rivaldo's cross

addition for the *Selecao*, whose qualification campaign had deeply underwhelmed. Winning only half their games, they finished third in the South American standings, 13 points behind first-placed Argentina.

The tournament in Japan and South Korea was a chance for the watching world to reacquaint itself with football's lost superstar. The expectation of 1998 has been replaced by curiosity; for the first time since he burst on to the European scene as a teenager with PSV in the mid-'90s, Ronaldo felt like an unknown quantity.

TOUCH DOWN

By the time he touches down in the far east, Ronaldo is 25 years old – middle aged for a footballer – with a new look from four years previously: his hair is no longer cropped so tightly and he is less lean. It soon becomes apparent that he plays a little differently, too: his speed is still there, but the distances he can traverse have shortened; long dribbles have been exchanged for clipped eruptions into space.

His finishing, though, has lost none of its inevitability.

"We always had a lot of confidence in Ronaldo's ability," centre-back Edmilson tells *World Soccer*, "just as we fully trusted the team's coaching and medical staff. And we also had other players on the rise, like Ronaldinho. So it was not something that worried us so much, because we were certain that he would give his best for Brazil and for us."

"It's always difficult to come back from an injury, so there was this question of how Ronaldo would be," adds midfielder Juninho Paulista. "He prepared very well and started the World Cup even better."

In Brazil's opening game, against Turkey, it is another shaven-headed forward who strikes first. Hasan Sas lashes past goalkeeper Marcos at the near post to give Turkey a surprise lead. Shortly after the break, though, Ronaldo has his goal, the first step on his march to redemption.

And it is more like a leap. Displaying an athleticism no one was sure he still possessed, Brazil's No.9 launches himself feet first at Rivaldo's sweeping cross from the left to volley into the net. Rivaldo manages to hog the headlines, not only striking a late winner from the penalty sport, but also providing the game's most remembered moment. With the Brazilian waiting to take a corner kick in stoppage time, Hakan Unsal fires the ball at Rivaldo's thigh, but the razor-cheeked attacker collapses to the turf clutching his face. The playacting results in a red card for Unsal.

There is nothing so close-fought or controversial in Brazil's final two group-stage fixtures. Ronaldo, Ronaldinho and Rivaldo each score in a 4-0 victory over China, before Ronaldo scores two early goals to set Luiz Felipe Scolari's side on course for a 5-2 win over Costa Rica.

"The team as a whole was more confident after these two games," says Juninho, "and Ronaldo and Rivaldo were starting to stand out."

Belgium prove much tougher opponents in the last 16. It requires an outstanding display of reflexes from Marcos to prevent the Red Devils scoring. A swivelling – and slightly deflected – 20-yard strike from Rivaldo relieves Brazil's frustration in the 67th minute. And three minutes before full time, Ronaldo scores for the fourth successive match, side-footing through goalkeeper Geert De Vlieger's legs from 12 yards out.

In the quarter-final, England manage to keep one Ronaldo from scoring, but they can't silence both. Ronaldo de Assis Moreira, better known as Ronaldinho, provides the assist as Rivaldo equalises Michael Owen's early strike, scores what proves to be the winner with a looping – possibly unintentional – strike from a free-kick that catches David Seaman off guard,

> The tournament in Japan and South Korea was a chance for the watching world to reacquaint itself with football's lost superstar…for the first time since the mid-'90s, Ronaldo felt like an unknown quantity

Semi-final...Ronaldo pokes home Brazil's winner versus Turkey

before ending his afternoon's work early when he is sent off before even an hour of play.

The semi-final brings a rematch with Turkey. And if it is possible for such a high-stakes game in the most-watched sporting event in the world to be overshadowed, then Ronaldo achieves just that when he debuts a unique and bizarre new hairstyle. He takes to the field sporting a head completely shaved except for a three-inch, semi-circular patch emanating from his hairline.

"We didn't see him do it," Juninho says. "I don't know what he was thinking to get that haircut!"

The hairdo might be jarringly unfamiliar, but his goal – his sixth of the World Cup – is trademark Ronaldo. Trademark pre-injury Ronaldo, even.

Receiving the ball from Gilberto Silva, 35 yards from goal and wide to the left, Ronaldo side-steps away from his first challenger. He darts into the penalty area and, just as he is confronted by another two defenders, unleashes a blink-quick stabbed shot. It is the goalscoring equivalent of a jazz musician playing on the off-beat. Ronaldo hits the ball – prods it – earlier than expected, striking out of rhythm, out of stride, yet sacrificing no accuracy. It flashes past goalkeeper Rustu Recber and into the far corner of the net. It is the game's only goal.

Brazil are back in the World Cup final. Ronaldo, unequivocally, is back.

THE REDEEMER

"Everyone keeps on reminding me of 1998 but I don't know why," said Ronaldo when inevitably questioned about his previous World Cup final appearance before Brazil face Germany at the International Stadium in Yokohama, Japan. "I keep on forgetting it and have no problem with it. I am just finding tranquillity to play a good game, and to bring the title to Brazil."

That, though, was merely posturing. What happened in France '98 is very much on his mind as kick-off nears. How could it not be?

"I heard him say, of his concern in the moments before the game, that he didn't want to sleep for fear that something might happen," remembers Juninho. "Thank God everything went well and he could be the highlight of the game again."

Irrespective of Ronaldo's anxiety, Brazil are buoyed by the performances of their rejuvenated star striker and confidence within the squad is high ahead of the final.

"I remember our arrival at the stadium," Juninho says. "We arrived very happy and doing a first-rate Samba. Everyone was watching, because it was the World Cup final and the team arrives like this. But it is our essence: joy but with focus."

> "He didn't want to sleep for fear that something might happen"
>
> **Juninho Paulista on Ronaldo ahead of the 2002 World Cup final**

The football, at least for the first hour of play, reflects more focus than joy. The tense caution of both sides is disrupted only when each takes a turn at rattling the frame of the opposition's goal either side of half-time: Brazil through a dipping Kleberson effort from 25 yards; Germany from even further, when Marcos tips a rapier-like Oliver Neuville strike on to the post.

Finally, after 67 minutes, a breakthrough. It begins innocuously

World Cup final... Ronaldo tucks home Brazil's opening goal

enough. Rivaldo strikes a low shot from outside the box that skips along the turf like a skimmed stone hopping over a lake. Smothering the ball should be easy work for Oliver Kahn, the German goalkeeper who will be named the Player of the Tournament. But in a rare moment of lapsed concentration, Kahn allows the ball to ricochet out of his grasp as he falls forward to gather it.

Four years on, fortune is belatedly shining on Ronaldo. He is the first to react. His reward: a simple tap-in from six yards.

Ronaldo scores again 12 minutes later, controlling a low Kleberson cross on the edge of the penalty area and measuring a finish beyond Kahn and into the bottom corner. He peels away in celebration in his familiar, iconic pose – arms spread wide like Christ the Redeemer, the towering statue that overlooks his home city of Rio de Janeiro.

There is the joy. There, also, is relief; Ronaldo the Redeemed.

Shortly after, Brazil captain Cafu hoists the World Cup into the obsidian Japanese sky. The Golden Boot belongs to Ronaldo. His eight-goal haul represents the largest any player has mustered at a single World Cup in 32 years. He will soon seal a €46 million move to Real Madrid and collect a second Ballon d'Or and a third FIFA World Player of the Year award, reclaiming the prestigious individual gongs for the first time since 1997.

Perhaps most valuable of all, he has exorcised the ghost of 1998.

"We played very hard for Ronaldo in that World Cup," Edmilson reflects. "For all that he had gone through and for all that we knew he could do for us, on and off the pitch. His path has been crooked, but these things only strengthen us after the triumph."

"Ronaldo was one of the best players – maybe the best – I played with," adds Juninho. "He could decide a match in seconds. He was phenomenal."

Fate might have made Ronaldo wait, but he would not allow his destiny to be denied.

LEFT: Decisive...Ronaldo celebrates after his second goal in the World Cup final
BELOW: Winners...Ronaldo and Rivaldo celebrate winning the final

SPECIAL FEATURE

THE LONG WALK

HOW TO WIN A PENALTY SHOOTOUT

A new FIFA+ documentary explores the history of World Cup penalty shootouts, and reveals the secrets behind some of the most famous successes and failures

Words: Jamie Evans

Andrea Pirlo is usually the coolest man on any football pitch that he happens to be on. So his choice as Italy's first penalty-taker in a World Cup final appears entirely logical, as footage of him calmly walking up to the ball appears to demonstrate.

But internally, his thoughts were "all over the place; drunken ideas at the wheel of fairground dodgems," according to the former midfielder.

"The two teams gather in the centre circle and the next player up has to make his way from there to the penalty spot," says Pirlo in his book, *I Think Therefore I Play*. "It's an experience I wouldn't wish on anyone. It's barely 50 metres, but it's a truly terrible journey, right through the heart of your fear."

The journey that Pirlo describes inspires the title of *The Long Walk*, a new FIFA+ documentary series all about penalties.

As well as charting the history of World Cup penalties – from Germany's victory over France in the first World Cup shootout in 1982, through the agonies of Roberto Baggio at USA '94 and Asamoah Gyan in 2010, right up to England's long-awaited success in 2018 – the three-part series sets out to disprove a myth: that shootouts are a lottery.

"It's gone from being something you might practise here and there, to something where you've got psychologists, scientists, data analysts, specialists teaching the goalkeepers, specialist teaching the kickers," says executive producer David Wooster. "Yes, there is an element of luck, but the fact is that if you practise, you will have a better chance of scoring."

The idea of shootouts being something that teams simply cannot replicate, and therefore practise, is dismissed. During the 2002 World Cup, for example, Guus Hiddink had his South Korea players practise shootouts by walking the full length of the pitch before taking their kick in order to try to replicate "the long walk". In the quarter-finals, the co-hosts overcame Spain in a shootout, with all five of their players converting.

This preparation is in stark contrast to England four years later.

"There's ten lads on the edge of the box just putting a ball down and taking a penalty," recalls Jamie Carragher, a member of Sven-Goran Eriksson's 2006 World Cup squad, in episode three. "Are we practising to get better, or are we practising so that we can't get criticised if we lose?"

As well as technique, the psychological burden of taking penalties is also examined. "I think they are as important as each other," says the series' director, Rob Sloman. "I love the idea of owning the situation and taking control, but you still have to take the kick.

"Belief is key for me and I think since this avalanche of psychology, more players than ever believe they are going to score."

One fact in particular demonstrates the significance of psychology when taking penalties. According to Geir Jordet, a professor of the Norwegian School of Sport Science and an expert on penalties, teams that lose penalty shootouts are more likely to go on and lose their next one – even when the identity of the players involved is completely different.

The Long Walk...Spain striker Alvaro Morata makes the lonely walk during the Euro 2020 semi-final shootout defeat to Italy

Rushed...Portugal keeper Ricardo saves Jamie Carragher's retaken penalty

The clearest example of this is England. "Something happened in that [Italia] '90 shootout that stayed with the England team for the next two decades," says Ben Lyttleton the man who literally wrote the book on penalties *(Twelve Yards: The Art and Psychology of the Perfect Penalty)* and provides a central voice in the series.

Carragher supports this. "I'd been involved with shootouts with Liverpool, and I always feel we'd win. I didn't feel that with England."

The former defender was involved in England's 2006 quarter-final defeat to Portugal, and his miss is the clearest example of a bad habit that a number of English players picked up over the years.

Essentially, there is an optimum time in which to take your penalty: rush and you lack the composure to place your shot accurately; wait too long and you become distracted by the growing pressure. The most successful kickers often take a deep breathe before embarking on their run-up.

With an average reaction time of less than 0.3 seconds from the referee's whistle, England have the fastest penalty-takers of any nation. "They treat the referee's whistle like a starting gun," says Jordet.

This "pressure pattern", as Jordet puts it, is symptomatic of the particularly intense pressure experienced by English players. The memories of past defeats lie heavy in their minds, no matter how accomplished they are at taking penalties.

"Ahead of the 2006 World Cup, data had shown that English players had the best penalty-conversion rate in club football of any nationality," says Lyttleton. "Get them in an England shirt and it was a different story."

Having impressed at taking penalties during training, Carragher was brought on against Portugal in the 119th minute, with the scores locked at 0-0. Two years earlier, the same opponents had knocked England out at the same stage of Euro 2004 and they were content to wait for another shootout – even after Wayne Rooney's 62nd-minute red card.

"If the game went to penalties we had an advantage," says Ricardo, Portugal's goalkeeper. "I said to my team-mates, 'I'm absolutely certain that the first player to shoot will be Frank Lampard ...I guarantee I'll save that penalty.'"

Sure enough, Ricardo went the right way and palmed away Lampard's shot.

Six penalties later it was Carragher's turn, with Portugal leading 2-1.

"I was trying to recreate a penalty – the 2001 Worthington Cup final," explains Carragher. "Put the ball down, boom, turn, go, put it that side. That's what I was trying to recreate."

The Liverpool defender does exactly as he'd planned, slotting the ball into the bottom-right corner. Yet Carragher had been so committed to his plan, so guilty of that English habit of rushing, that he hadn't even waited for the whistle. The referee instructed him to take it again.

"I felt the terror in his face, having to take the penalty again," says Ricardo. "I'm going to trick you. I'm going to change your plans."

"He knows where I want to go. Do I keep that side, or go the other side?" says Carragher. "My head is [all over the place]."

The defender changes his aim, and goes for the other side. Ricardo guesses right, and tips it onto the bar. Moments later, Cristiano Ronaldo converts, and England are eliminated. "I just wish I'd have blasted that second one," the former Liverpool defender admits.

Far more prestigious strikers of a football than Carragher have been guilty of rushing their kicks, though. In *Twelve Yards*, Lyttleton highlights the case of Marco van Basten in the semi-final of Euro '92 against Denmark. A highly-accomplished penalty taker, and arguably the best player in the world at the time, the Netherlands striker "spotted the ball far quicker than he normally did, and his shot was saved."

Supersub...Tim Krul comes on for the Netherlands in 2014

Interestingly, the goalkeeper that day, Peter Schmeichel, offers a different version of events.

"The moment the final whistle blew I made my picks: (1) left, (2) left, (3) right, (4) left, (5) left. That was which way I would be diving for their penalties. With shootouts, I always decided it like that," explains the Dane in his autobiography, *One*.

"Think about a shootout from the goalkeeper's point of view...you are literally out of control, and control is the one thing you always want to have.

"So what can you control? Only one thing: which way you dive. This is why, in advance, I always made my selections and made them randomly.

"Now I know something the opposition does not. Now I have a tiny feeling of the upper hand again."

Just as penalty takers can attempt to take control of the situation, by taking their kick in their own time, goalkeepers can wrestle it back again – whether by Schmeichel's technique, or other mind games.

"When you save one in a shootout, it's play-acting time," Schmeichel adds. "Time to strut, to project to everyone that you're unbeatable, that you're Super Goalie. So you stand tall and look arrogantly at the crowd: 'Yeah, this is what I expected.'"

Perhaps the most memorable example of a goalkeeper taking charge was in 2014, when Netherlands coach Louis van Gaal brought on Tim Krul in the dying moments of his team's quarter-final with Costa Rica in order to face the penalties. "If you're allowed to select three goalkeepers anyway, then you select one based on the fact that he stopped a lot of penalties," says the Dutch boss.

> "I felt the terror in his face, having to take the penalty again. I'm going to trick you. I'm going to change your plans"
>
> **Portugal goalkeeper Ricardo on facing England's Jamie Carragher in 2006**

Ironically, of the three Dutch keepers in the squad, statistically Krul was not the specialist. With two saves in the previous 20 penalties that he'd faced, he was at least better than the man he replaced, Jasper Cillessen (zero out of 16), but worse than his fellow substitute, Michel Vorm (three out of 11).

Yet that was irrelevant; what mattered was the theatre, the drama, and the psychological impact that the change had.

With just a few minutes of extra-time remaining, Krul was sent to warm up, in an attempt to sow fear in the minds of the Costa Rican players.

In the previous round, Costa Rica had beaten Greece on penalties, converting all five. Yet to Krul, this was an advantage: "They know that I've seen those penalties. And they also think: 'They've brought this guy on, so he must be some kind of specialist.'"

Krul describes seeing himself on the big screen as he walks to the goal for the shootout, imagining his friends and family and all the other millions of people watching him in that moment. And he rises to the moment; the Dutchman has only been on stage for a few minutes, but is already making himself the main character in this unfolding drama. He patrols his area, dominates the space between the spot and goal-line, barking in Dutch to former Twente forward Bryan Ruiz, and attempting to intimidate the Costa Rican players as much as possible.

"I've never seen a goalkeeper take up so much space," says Jordet, who has literally watched millions of penalties in conducting his research. "My favourite is when he starts to warm up right on the six-yard line, right in front of [Michael Umana]."

Umana was Costa Rica's fifth taker, and he had to score to keep his team in the game. "When you look in the eyes of Michael at that moment, he looked petrified," says Krul. "The pressure of the whole country was on his shoulders, you could see it."

Inevitably, Krul went the right way, and the Dutch went through.

It was not a ploy that they would be able to repeat. In the semi-final against Argentina, they went to penalties again. Sadly for Krul though, they had no more substitutes: he had to watch from the bench. Argentina scored four out of four, and advanced to the final.

Having so craftily masterminded the quarter-final victory, and accepted huge credit for it, Van Gaal went into his post-semi-final press conference and said: "Penalties are down to luck." His chuckle when this is put to him in *The Long Walk* suggests that he probably knows this isn't true.

As with so many other areas of modern football, the level of detail that goes into preparing for shootouts is forensic. Teams now accept that if they are to win a major tournament, they will probably have to come through a shootout at some point.

"The amount of information available now is bonkers," admits Sloman. "We heard one or two stories that we weren't allowed to include that just show where we are now with data. And everyone is using it now so it will be interesting to see what happens in Qatar."

Could a team end up winning a shootout thanks to *The Long Walk*? One already has.

"My lad was playing in an Under-10 tournament with his team this summer and they went to penalties in both the semi-final and the final," says Sloman. "I told our boys to just take their time and breathe, and the goalkeeper to mess around a bit – talk to the opposition boys before their kick and maybe dance about and create a visual distraction. It worked!"

The Long Walk is available to watch now on FIFA+

Facetoface

KASPER HJULMAND

"The second Eriksen stepped into the national team again, things changed"

Denmark's coach discusses his team's prospects in Qatar

What are your reflections on Euro 2020 when Denmark reached the last four and in many ways were the team and story of the tournament?
The European Championship was of course a roller coaster, emotionally and the way the team was tested. We showed tremendous team spirit. You reveal yourself when things like this happen, all the layers are peeled away and you see the core of the team. We showed who we were. I cannot praise both the team and the staff enough, but also the nation; we were standing together. A *Washington Post* headline read: "We are red, we are white, we stand together side by side." That is the core. We stood together and showed the character of the team.

How special is it to have Christian Eriksen back on a football field?
It is very special. It is still with me and it's kind of a miracle that he is still alive, and that's the most important thing. The second part is that he is actually playing football again. It is a gift for us all. In his comeback [in March], he showed that he is simply a phenomenal football player. The second he stepped into the national team again – half-time against the Netherlands – immediately things changed. He is a fantastic football player. I said this before it happened, but he is the heart of the team. I am very happy to see him back on the pitch. Just being able to work with him is a privilege and a pleasure. Since his comeback, he has shown how important he is for Denmark. He is a great player but an even better person.

You've had little time to prepare for this World Cup, but players should be at peak fitness while playing for their clubs. How will you deal with this unusual dynamic?
That's true, but what about players who didn't get much playing time, or players with small injuries in the last month before the World Cup? It's a very difficult situation that we don't have time to prepare for. Our medical staff can't work with the players before the World Cup. As a coach, you pick the players, you cross your fingers and you make the tactics work, but everything to do with physical fitness is not in our hands, it is in the players' hands. Every day they wake up they should think about the ambitions we have for the World Cup. They must prepare the physical part themselves because we don't have the time. For example, Kasper Dolberg and Mikkel Damsgaard didn't play much before the European Championship at Nice and Sampdoria, so we prepared them for three weeks with hard, intense work, and I introduced them in the second and the third match. That was after three weeks. We can't do that this time, so they need to be fit. They have to do it themselves.

What kind of a World Cup do you expect – the first winter World Cup, the first in the Arab world, and a very compact one?
I expect a very high level. There are a lot of good teams out there and the game has developed a lot, not just at the club level. We won't have time to prepare, but the players should show up fresh and in shape and at their best. That is a positive. From a footballing point of view, it will be very competitive. That will be very interesting.

Wing-back Joakim Maehle was your joint-top scorer during qualifying with five goals. Are you worried that your forwards don't score enough goals?
I am not that worried, but if we look at where we are as a national team, our position in the FIFA ranking and the teams around us, you are right: our

attacking players still have to improve. But they are young and have the potential to make the step to even bigger clubs.

Andreas Skov Olsen, who is at Club Brugge and playing very well, is an outstanding talent. It is only a matter of time before he takes another step. He is in a good place right now, but he has bigger potential. For Damsgaard and Dolberg to be able to take the next steps, that's important for our national team. There is a lot of talent and possibilities.

Your goalkeeper Kasper Schmeichel moved away from Leicester City after a somewhat irregular season last term.
He had a good season. I don't share the view that he was irregular. Leicester City had an up-and-down season with some issues. Schmeichel did a good job. He is unbelievably important for Denmark. He was convinced that Nice had a very ambitious project. After 11 years at the same club, he believes that he can still learn new things. He is curious to develop, even at his age. I am sure that he made his choice from a perspective: "I want to be better; I want to progress as a player and person." That's the way he thinks.

Hosts Qatar have been criticised for their human rights record and labour law issues. Human Rights Watch and others have called on FIFA and Qatar to compensate migrant workers and their families. Is that something you support?
We will find our way in this. Now and in the future, it is very important that we stick to the 17 goals of sustainable development that the United Nations have set out, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights that the whole world signed in 1948. It has nothing to do with politics. It is much more fundamental and I just urge every decision-maker to make the world a better place through football so as to ensure that our children wake up in a better world.

There is a lot of discussion on what is the best way to help in this issue, but a migrant worker centre, I think, can help the workers, legally as well. It could be a physical thing that you can see. There are more knowledgeable people than me, but I try to talk to a lot of people and read up. It is important that we are open-minded, that there is dialogue, and that people meet and discuss openly and freely. That is the point of developing, but it is very important that sports and its decision-makers always think about how we can make the world a better place for the next generation.

Interview by Samindra Kunti

Facetoface

CARLOS QUEIROZ

"We are among the best 32 teams in the world. Let's enjoy it"

After being thrust back into the Iran job on the eve of the 2022 World Cup, Carlos Queiroz discusses his team's chances in Qatar

Ever since you returned to Iran, expectations have skyrocketed. How do you maintain a sense of realism among the supporters?
For me, it is not bad to feel that. That pressure raises our responsibility, our motivation and our duties. But I confess that inside the group our expectations to do well are exactly at the same level as the fans. So there's nothing wrong with that because we feel the same. We want to move forward, be better, and for sure in 2014 and 2018 we had our expectations to reach the second round of the World Cup and nothing has changed. We go for the third one with the same belief and the same ambition.

Have Iran been underestimated by their group rivals?
I never think in that way because I don't care what other people think about us. I care about what we think about ourselves. We can't control their opinion. We have our strengths and qualities; we have, of course, some weaknesses like all teams. Nobody is perfect. At the right moment, it will be time to speak on the pitch. Those feelings, those comments – they don't count. We will be better prepared but at the end of the day what is important is to make a great performance, to play good football and leave the results in the hand of God. That's all we can do.

You said that you were glad to be playing against England in Group B, a team and country that you know very well.
Iran were also glad to play Portugal, to play Spain. We are happy to play the best teams in the world because – like everyone in life – we work to be among the best teams and the best players in the world. So, to be there, for us is a moment of happiness. We just can't lose this opportunity. It is the wrong approach to work your whole life, go to the World Cup and be minor players. No, we go there and are among the best 32 national teams in the world at this moment. Let's enjoy it!

England and Wales struggled in the build-up. Did that make you happy?
For the moment, it is not important and it doesn't make me happy. It could make me happy if they're not doing their best on match day. That could happen. What we expect in the World Cup is great games, great matches and great performances. We belong to this big family, the industry of entertainment, and our job – Iran, England, Wales, Spain, Portugal, everyone – should be engaged with only one goal: to create happiness, joy and pride for our supporters.

You wrote a thesis about the United States. Can they become successful?
Progress in football is happening everywhere. That is modern football. With video technology, you can feel and touch the progress of humans very easily. In the game, the majority of the people do not see it, but we, the professionals, know how a game is moving forward, how it is faster, quicker thinking, quicker decision-making, and better-prepared players. This happens in all countries in the world, including the United States. Europe is a clear example of that. They are year after year taking off, compared to other continents. Now, they have this Nations League. They compete among themselves and they are growing faster and better compared to other countries and other continents in the world.

But this World Cup is something different because what we are going to face is completely new: a short period of resting time during the tournament and a competition played in November which is completely different from other World Cups. We have players in Europe that come with 15, 18 games in their legs. In other World Cups, they have 65, 70 games in their legs. So, let's see what happens. For sure, something different will happen in this World Cup.

How will you deal with players that don't play that much at their clubs?
It's always a concern when players are not match fit, of course. But today, with the communication systems that we have, it's possible to create some complementary actions and solutions. It is not exactly the same. But we will try our best in order to give all the players that don't have enough minutes, enough individual preparation to be ready.

Interview by Samindra Kunti

Facetoface

ROBERTO MARTINEZ

"This is going to be the strongest World Cup ever"

Belgium's long-serving coach sits down with *World Soccer*

What did your team learn from the disappointment of both Euro 2020 and the 2020-21 Nations League final four?
We use every game as an opportunity to get to know better player partnerships and how the team can perform at its very best. But the biggest takeaway was that there is a different approach when teams are playing against Belgium and we need to be able to cope and manage those situations better. When we were 2-0 up at half-time against France there is a different way of playing that game and that is an aspect that we need to learn from. But in the European Championship, when taking the time to analyse it properly, there are many things that we did well: we won four games and in the Italy game we showed the right attitude, we never gave up and gave everything we had for the 90 minutes. It is on the back of experiences like these that you can become more prepared.

Is Thibaut Courtois currently the world's best goalkeeper?
I've said it before and it is very easy to say it again. In 2018, he was named the best goakeeper of the World Cup and I felt that he was. With the move to Real Madrid, he had to adapt and he had to grow very quickly. From that point on he has consistently been the number one goalkeeper in the world at international and club level. It is not a subjective opinion – the stats reflect it. In the Champions League [games against Manchester City, Liverpool, Celtic and RB Leipzig], he faced 25 attempts and saved 24. That includes the final and the semi-final. It is quite an extraordinary performance. It is not a subjective opinion, it is very factual.

Eden Hazard and Romelu Lukaku have not always had it that easy. Is it a big concern for you that they still face problems, both medical and physical?
Players always get moments of form, ups and downs. As a national team coach, you are not concerned with that. What concerns you more is when there is a bigger issue. And the bigger issue is that you are not part of an important project or you are not feeling physically well. Eden has found a solution since February. I would say that with the new treatment, he is now pain-free, he is ready to compete and he is ready to enjoy his football. The role that he has at Real Madrid and the role that he has in the national team are completely different. I am not concerned at all. Of course, the lack of match fitness can be an issue before a World Cup but we need to adjust those elements.

With Romelu, it is very similar. In the summer he got the move that he wanted. He is a vital part of a team that is on a huge mission to try to get the Serie A title back in the city. I see him as someone who is enjoying every second of that challenge. So, I am not concerned when you talk about players who are well above 100 caps for the national team. I am not concerned about their moments of form or their short-term performances. It is more about the stories they are enjoying. Both stories are positive from the national team's point of view.

The so-called "Youri Tielemans Generation" is now becoming more and more prominent. How do you maintain the balance in your team?
I think that it is an issue that you want to bring to the football pitch. It is not a decision that you make in an office or in a presentation. You see the new generation coming through. What is important for us is that what the current generation has achieved – a consistent level of wins and performances on the world stage – is followed through for the next 20 years. For that you need generations. When they are coming through they need to be ready and prepared to reach the levels that are needed. When you look at some of the young players, they look ready; they look prepared to add something to the team. So you leave football to make the decision. It is a competitive environment and we like young players to come and show what they can do; the same way the experienced players keep performing. Football makes the decision.

What is your assessment of Group F?
It is an interesting group because it is very diverse. There is a European nation that we all know very well, Croatia. They've got this wonderful generation that finished second at the World Cup in Russia. Since then there has been a lot of consistency with the coach and the way they play. Canada have been very impressive, a team that is capable of beating the USA and Mexico. They finished top in that confederation which deserves a lot of respect. And there is a big community of Moroccan people in Belgium – there are five or six players who were born in Belgium, and staff members that have been with both federations – so those links will make it a derby. The games will be a lot closer than the rankings suggest.

On paper, the knockout phase of the World Cup looks very tough for Belgium. Perhaps Spain or Germany in the round of 16 and Brazil in the quarter-finals.
That's why, when going to a major tournament, there are no favourites. You've got a cluster of nations that you expect to achieve certain results, that are capable of going all the way. But there are no easy games. Everyone has a lot of information about each other and prepares the game in very good ways. In terms of the physical capacity of the players, this is going to be a peak competition. Played in November when they are all fully fit, not even mental fatigue.

I believe that this is going to be the strongest World Cup ever due to the fact that the players are going to be in the perfect condition physically and mentally. I am not looking at finding easy games because they do not exist.

Can Belgium reach the heights of the last World Cup in Russia?
We need to be at our very best. We need to be ready to contribute well. We need to use the five subs and the 26-man squad well. There are many unknowns because they have never happened before: playing in the winter, playing in the same city. It is the first time that it will ever happen. We want to take this tournament as if there is no tomorrow. This is the only way to do it: with intensity, with all of our passion, with all of our beliefs and our responsibility knowing that there are huge expectations. But this is something that these players need to reach the best level of performance. We are looking forward to it and we hope that we can make our fans proud.

Interview by Samindra Kunti
This is a longer version of an interview that appeared in World Soccer's World Cup Special

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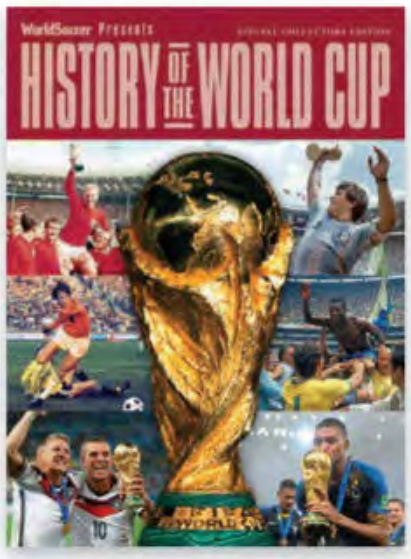

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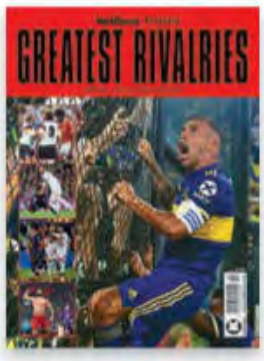

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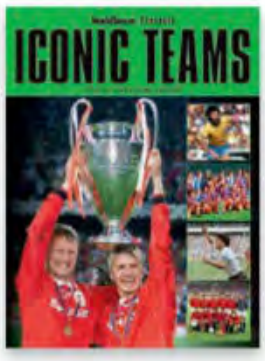

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TAKING ON THE BIG BOYS

The newly-formed Union of European Clubs is seeking to offer greater representation in European football governance

WORDS Steve Menary

Does European football have a problem with representation?

UEFA's latest benchmarking report found that 724 clubs played in their countries' top divisions in 2021-22; so how can an organisation with 245 members possibly claim to represent all of the continent's clubs?

The European Club Association emerged in 2008 as a replacement for the old G14 bloc of leading clubs that had lobbied for greater power in European football and has surrendered none of that body's power.

The ECA membership roster has grown by more than 100 clubs since its formation and all of UEFA's 55 members have at least one ordinary member, but this does not always confer voting rights. Many members are only associates with no chance to influence decisions at the ECA, which is still dominated by the elite clubs behind the G14 that now occupy the majority of places on UEFA's influential club committee.

At the recent ECA congress, chairman Nasser Al Khelaifi claimed: "Under the new ECA, we are more creative, more collective, more connected."

If European football is more collective, why are more than 100 European clubs supporting proposals for a new body aimed at small-to-medium sized clubs?

After two years of speaking with stakeholders across the European game, the Union of European Clubs was quietly launched at the Play the Game conference on sports governance in Denmark last summer.

Katarina Pijetlovic, an associate professor in Sports Law at Manchester Metropolitan University and one of three people behind UEC, was delivering a strident broadside against the inequalities of European football ("Billionaires and breakaways: Is that the future of football?") when she dropped in a mention of the UEC.

Paris Saint-Germain and ECA chairman...Nasser Al Khelaifi

"ECA's membership is not open to all professional clubs. In fact, it's closed for most professional clubs," Pijetlovic told the audience in Odense. "There are about 1,100 professional clubs in Europe but ECA's ordinary membership counts about 100 clubs. These 100 clubs have the voting rights but not the deciding rights because the deciding rights belong to the top 20-30 clubs according to the UEFA coefficient.

"The deciding rights mean that the decisions are made in ECA by the elite clubs for the elite clubs. If you look at their executive board, you can see these clubs can always maintain a majority. Everything in their interest is not usually in the interest of the other European clubs.

"The small and medium sized clubs should not be happy with the breadcrumbs they get from being a member of ECA or of their executive committees, where they can always be outvoted by the elite clubs, which means their votes do not count for anything. It's about the lack of quality of representation; it's only the top clubs that benefit from these governance structures.

"There is now a new stakeholder in European football and that is the Union of European Clubs. It will be a game changer. The aim is to get together all the clubs that feel they are not represented properly by ECA or they are not represented at all by ECA because

Play The Game...Katarina Pijetlovic speaking at the conference in Denmark
Credit: Thomas Sondergaard/ Play the Game

the membership is not open to them."

The ECA's dominant position in European football's firmament was best illustrated at the 2018 World Football Summit in Madrid. As the then-ECA president Andrea Agnelli, Juventus' chairman, took the stage, the audience was encouraged to stand as if welcoming the Sun King.

> "There is now a new stakeholder in European football and that is the Union of European Clubs. It will be a game changer"
>
> Katarina Pijeltovic, UEC co-founder

Agnelli's audience massively over-ran, leaving little time for the final speaker, Georges Pangl, then the secretary of European Leagues, which represents 37 professional leagues in 31 European countries. Pangl was shoehorned in and given no time to answer questions. The elite were applauded, the rest given no voice.

Since then, the ECA's dominant position has only increased, as has the gap between the continent's elite clubs and the rest. A new third-tier European competition, the UEFA Conference League, was introduced in 2021-22 just as access to the Champions League was slowly made harder for clubs outside the elite.

Over the past 11 years, eight clubs have made their debut in the group stage of the Champions League, but five were gifted places courtesy of UEFA rules that favour stronger leagues and placate bigger clubs, typically influential ECA members. The last team to qualify for the group stage without this UEFA support was the Russian club Rostov in 2016-17.

Juventus chairman ...Andrea Agnelli

With the launch of the UEFA Conference League, more money is going to a wider range of European clubs yet a dozen ECA members were also behind last year's botched and widely reviled attempt to from a European Super League.

As the chasm between the elite and the rest was growing, Pijetlovic, Gareth Farrelly, a sports lawyer and former player for Everton and the Republic of Ireland, and Dennis Gudasic, a director of Croatian side Lokomotiv Zagreb, were quietly developing the UEC.

Speaking months after the UEC broke cover, Farrelly says: "There is an education process for people to understand how the game really works and how the rules have evolved over time to benefit the elite clubs. This is the fundamental reality of how football works.

"We have spoken to over 100 clubs and interest isn't the problem, but there is a careful balancing act at this time not to compromise these clubs [by identifying them]. We don't want to be seen as conflictual but to work with other stakeholders to provide a voice for those that don't feel they are currently represented or heard."

Along with identifying members, the UEC is also trying to educate stakeholders across European football about how the game is run, including the European Union.

Dennis Gudasic says: "The ECA has done a fantastic job in lobbying EU institutions. We realised when we spoke to the EU and other policy makers in Europe the challenges they face in understanding the structure, governance and decision making that has evolved in European football, and think the ECA are recognised as the sole representative of all clubs.

"It is evident that this is not the case and there is a need for the UEC to be formed."

This lobbying has been enabled by UEFA cash. ECA accounts for 2021-22 show UEFA provided €10m in funding, with membership fees contributing just €25,000. This covered the ECA's wage bill of €4.5m and spending of €3.6m on events, travel costs, consultancy and research.

This might seem like an unequal fight, but the UEC does not see their role as provoking a fight – despite having to make some uncomfortable points.

Gudasic adds: "We don't see ourselves as opposing the ECA but as a complementary association and adding to a strong and diverse ecosystem. At this time, one of the areas that needs to be addressed is the Memorandums of Understanding between UEFA and the ECA."

These MOUs are doubly complicated. In return for the ECA recognising UEFA as the sole organisers of European

European Club Association...the ECA's general assembly

football, UEFA recognises ECA as the sole representative of Europe's clubs – despite less than a quarter actually being members.

A problem for clubs pledging support to the UEC is that those sides playing in UEFA competition must also recognise the ECA as the sole organiser of the continent's clubs before receiving prize money. Publicly backing the UEC could cost smaller cash-starved clubs vital income.

The MOUs also matter because three clubs behind the Super League idea, Real Madrid, Barcelona and Juventus, continue to argue that the current model of European football governance is unsustainable and have taken their complaint to the European Court of Justice in Luxembourg.

As this case rumbles on, there are signs that the emergence of the UEC is having an impact. The UEC says there has been no contact with the ECA, but in September the ECA Network was launched for up to 160 clubs that are "knocking on the door of Europe" according to ECA chief executive officer Charlie Marshall.

The network is to be "knowledge-based" so no more money or votes. Even with this network, the ECA would still "represent" less than half of the continent's clubs.

In early October, UEFA president Aleksander Ceferin told the 2022 congress of global journalism body AIPS: "European football stayed united and is now more united than ever." Days later, Real Madrid president Florentino Perez shattered this brief illusion, saying: "The objective of the Super League is to modernise football. What sense does it have depriving fans of big games? Liverpool and Real Madrid have only met nine times in 67 years."

This "modernisation" would only further leave behind swathes of European clubs, including the majority still not represented in any way by ECA.

UEC co-founder ...Dennis Gudasic
Credit: Damir Krajac/ Cropix

> "There is a huge group of disenfranchised clubs, who have a very indirect influence on the industry under the current system, and this group needs to be represented"
>
> Olivier Jarosz, former ECA director

UEC co-founder... Gareth Farrelly

These are the clubs that the UEC is seeking to unite and protect.

World Soccer asked if UEFA had any contact with the UEC or plans to do so and was told: "UEFA has a MOU with the European Club Association, as well as a MOU with European Leagues." *World Soccer* also asked ECA and European Leagues for a comment on the UEC but neither had replied as this article went to press.

Olivier Jarosz, who was the club management programme director at ECA until 2020 and is now an independent consultant at LTT Sports, says: "The UEC is filling a gap in representation, in the sense that it doesn't matter whether it's UEC or not – ultimately there is a huge group of disenfranchised clubs, who have a very indirect influence on the industry under the current system, and this group needs to be represented."

Once a ruling on the Super League case has been made, the UEC's discreet campaign of education is likely to step up a notch as Europe's ignored clubs seek greater representation.

Glenn Moore

Abuse scandal tarnishes NWSL campaign

Portland Thorns' third title is overshadowed by a report into abuse within the women's game in the United States

A dark shadow hung over the closing stages of the NWSL season following the release of a horrifying report into abuse within the league compiled by former acting US attorney general Sally Yates. The report investigated three coaches, Paul Riley, Rory Dames and Christy Holly, who between them worked at five NWSL clubs up until the end of the 2021 season.

It detailed abusive behaviour and sexual misconduct by the coaches – dating back decades in the cases of Riley and Dames – and a permissive attitude from owners more interested in results than welfare.

The trio deny the allegations but the testimony is extensive and detailed. The report also makes clear this is just a snapshot; they also heard many similar tales of abuse in US women's soccer – including at junior levels – that were outside their remit.

With the three coaches already exiled from the sport the immediate consequences of the report were felt in the higher echelons, with owners feeling the heat for their lax approach to ensuring players were protected.

Chicago Red Stars players quickly issued a statement calling for the removal of team owner Arnim Whisler. He has not yet sold but was removed as chairman by the team's board of directors.

Portland Thorns owner Merritt Paulson then stepped down as CEO of the club having already fired two veteran executives criticised in Yates' investigation. Again there have been demands – especially from fans – that he sell the club.

Jeff Plush, who was NWSL commissioner for much of the period covered but did not respond to the Yates investigation, departed his role with USA Curling. The organisation had initially resisted calls for his exit.

Nor is the Yates report the only enquiry going on. A joint-investigation by NWSL and the players' union is not yet concluded but has already seen former Orlando Pride coach Amanda Cromwell and assistant Sam Greene fired. They had both been suspended in June. The investigation found evidence of "verbal abuse," "improper favouritism" and "retaliation". Cromwell said she was "reviewing all legal options".

Adding further to the soul-searching were back-to-back defeats for the national team in Europe. Losing 2-1 to European champions England in front of 76,893 at Wembley was one thing; being beaten 2-0 by a Spain side that had lost 15 regular internationals due to discontent with manager Jorge Vilda was something else. Both matches were played to the backdrop of the release of the Yates Report, which didn't help, but they underlined that the rest of the world has caught up.

DRAMATIC PLAY-OFFS

What shafts of hope there were came from an exciting NWSL season. The arrival of Californian clubs Angel City and San Diego Wave, taking the ten-year-old league to a record 12 teams, proved a boon.

Angel City – the club backed by a series of mostly female celebrity investors – drew the league's largest average gate: 19,105, never dipping below 16,000.

Wave pulled in the biggest crowd, 32,000 for the Californian derby. Led by NWSL Coach of the Year, Englishwoman Casey Stoney, they came third in the league, thereby becoming the first expansion club to make the play-offs.

On a dramatic final day of the regular season, Laura Harvey's OL Reign claimed the NWSL Shield by leapfrogging leaders Portland Thorns, who threw away a 3-1 lead at bottom-placed side Gotham FC.

The six-team play-offs began with late drama. In their first-ever play-off tie, Houston Dash drew a club-record crowd of 21,284, but came up against a fine performance from Kansas City Current keeper Adrianna Franch. Kate Del Fava then won the match 2-1 for the visitors with a goal in the tenth minute of added time.

A few hours later, 26,215 fans – a new play-off record – saw Wave beat Red Stars by the same score, with Alex Morgan netting an extra-time winner.

In the semi-finals Franch was Current's saviour again, making seven saves to shut out a Reign side that dominated the match but failed to convert any of their 16 shots or 14 corners. Instead they conceded after four and 64 minutes to Alexis Loera and Kristen Hamilton, meaning they have now won three Shields in a row

Sell the clubs... a Portland Thorns fan protests against the club's owner

> The report, compiled by former acting US attorney general Sally Yates, detailed abusive behaviour and sexual misconduct by three coaches…and a permissive attitude from owners more interested in results than welfare

without lifting their first Championship.

In the other semi-final, Wave took an early lead through Taylor Kornieck, but Rocky Rodriguez equalised in spectacular fashion 12 minutes later. As extra-time loomed Crystal Dunn – coming off the bench as she continues her return to full fitness after giving birth – cracked in a stunning winner.

NWSL TITLE RETURNS TO PORTLAND

Plenty of Portland fans made the 2,000-mile journey to Washington D.C. for the final, heeding the players' call for backing. League MVP Sophia Smith said fan support is: "One of the positive things we have left in Portland," a statement that spoke volumes about the impact the abuse scandal was having, even on those players not directly affected.

"We need you more than ever...let us know you are bearing this heavy burden with us," added goalkeeper Bella Bixby, while owner Paulson opted to stay at home. His presence would likely have been an unpopular distraction.

Kansas had come a long way since their bottom-place finish in 2021, but on the day Thorns' clear superiority was evident from the moment Smith seized on an error to round Franch and score. Bixby did not need to make a save as a team with the vast experience of Christine Sinclair (39), Becky Sauerbrunn (37) and Meghan Klingenberg (34) controlled the match.

An unfortunate Addisyn Merrick own goal in the 56th minute effectively killed the game and the only surprise was Thorns, expertly set up by first-season coach Rhian Wilkinson, did not score more.

Broadcast on primetime US Saturday night television for the first time, the game drew 915,000 viewers with domestic and overseas streams probably taking that figure past a million. All of which was enough to suggest that, after a very bleak year, there is light ahead.

Champions...Becky Sauerbrunn and Christine Sinclair celebrate with the NWSL trophy

Round-up

South American champions... Palmeiras

PALMEIRAS MAINTAIN BRAZILIAN DOMINANCE

Palmeiras won the 14th Copa Libertadores Feminina, staged in Ecuador with 16 teams, the 11th success by a Brazilian team but a first for the *Alviverde*.

With a strong emphasis on set-plays they won all six matches concluding with a 4-1 defeat of Boca Juniors. The first Argentine club to reach the final, Boca had beaten the holders Corinthians in the quarter-final. Colombian clubs Deportivo Cali and America made up the last four.

LYON HUMBLED BY ARSENAL

Arsenal kicked off the Champions League with an astonishing 5-1 win at injury-hit holders Lyon, who last lost by more than a single goal in the competition in 2009. Caitlin Foord and Beth Mead scored twice, Frida Maanum, surprisingly included in place of Vivianne Miedema, once.

Brace scorer ...Beth Mead

FOUR BID FOR 2025 EUROS

There are four bids to stage the 2025 Euros. Poland, France and Switzerland, none of whom have held the event, have bid individually. There is also a joint-Scandinavian proposition from Denmark, Finland, Norway and Sweden, each of whom has hosted before. The decision will be revealed on January 25.

BRAZIL AT WEMBLEY

The inaugural women's Finalissima will be played between England and Brazil at Wembley, April 6, 2023.

2023 WORLD CUP DRAW

The 2019 finalists, United States and Netherlands, were paired together in the 2023 World Cup draw with debutants Vietnam having the dubious honour of being the Americans' first opponents. Another first-timer, Republic of Ireland, will launch the tournament against co-hosts Australia in Sydney on July 20, before New Zealand open their half of the draw against Norway in Auckland. The inter-confederational play-offs take place in February.

THE DRAW

GROUP A
New Zealand, Norway, Philippines, Switzerland

GROUP B
Australia, Canada, Nigeria, Republic of Ireland

GROUP C
Costa Rica, Japan, Spain, Zambia

GROUP D
China, Denmark, England, Senegal/Haiti/Chile

GROUP E
Netherlands, United States, Vietnam, Cameroon/Thailand/Portugal

GROUP F
Brazil, France, Jamaica, Taiwan/Paraguay/Papua New Guinea/Panama

GROUP G
Argentina, Italy, South Africa, Sweden

GROUP H
Colombia, Germany, Morocco, South Korea

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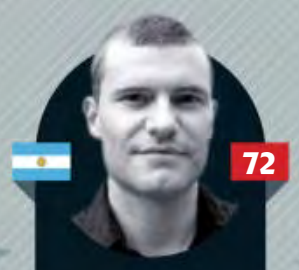

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Mexico

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South Korea

Boca Juniors ...Argentine champions

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South America

TIM VICKERY

Flamengo reclaim Copa

Brazilian giants return to the top of South American club football after last year's Copa Libertadores second place

In the third consecutive all-Brazilian final of the Copa Libertadores, playing their third final in four years, Flamengo bounced back from the heartbreak of last year's defeat to overcome Athletico Paranaense and win the trophy for the third time.

The Rio giants were hot favourites against the team from the southern city of Curitiba, who were aiming to land the cup for the first time. Athletico had battled their way through every stage of the competition. Flamengo, meanwhile, had cruised their way through, and ended the campaign with the superb record of 12 wins and a draw, scoring 33 and conceding just eight.

But on a warm afternoon in Guayaquil, Ecuador, Athletico made them work very hard for their 1-0 triumph, at least in the first half.

Veteran Athletico coach Luiz Felipe Scolari surprised with a man-for-man marking system that prevented Flamengo from hitting their usual stride. Clever playmakers Everton Ribeiro and Giorgian De Arrascaeta could not find the space to bring strikers Pedro and Gabriel Barbosa into the game. Flamengo had most of the ball, but carried little threat, and were mostly kept far from goal, while Athletico enjoyed some interesting moments on the counter attack.

As the half wore on, though, Flamengo coach Dorival Junior's calls for more movement began to pay dividends. Space began to appear and Athletico started to pick up cards – which became a problem shortly before half-time when centre-back Pedro Henrique saw his second yellow and was sent off. Athletico's uphill task was surely made worse by the decision to delay making an important switch. Substitute centre-back Matheus Felipe stood ready to be brought on, but Scolari decided to wait for the

Champions...Flamengo lift their second Copa Libertadores trophy in four years

Tournament top scorer...Flamengo's 12-goal striker Pedro celebrates with the trophy

break to make the change, dropping Fernandinho into the back line instead.

But now Flamengo had room to elaborate, and when Everton Ribeiro curled in a cross from the right, Fernandinho was lost and Gabriel Barbosa burst behind him to turn in from close range.

Athletico now had to chase the game in adverse conditions: a man down against superior opposition and in the afternoon heat. Scolari switched to an orthodox 4-4-1 and ran through attacking changes during the second half. But other than the occasional set-piece – a well-saved free-kick from Uruguayan substitute David Terans stands out – they made little impression. As the game opened up, Flamengo looked much more likely to add a second, with Everton Ribeiro and De Arrascaeta now finding space between the lines to set up the play. But the strikers wasted a number of promising opportunities on the counter, and 1-0 was the final score.

Ten days earlier Flamengo also won the domestic Brazilian Cup, overcoming Corinthians on a penalty shootout. The finals were low-key affairs in which the team was not at its fluent best. But these are major titles, and a triumph for Dorival Junior, whose main virtue was to go back to basics after a disastrous experience with Portuguese coach Paulo Sousa and his clumsy attempts to shoehorn the side into his preferred system of three centre-backs. Dorival went back to a 4-4-2 with a diamond midfield, with De Arrascaeta at the head and Everton Ribeiro free to drift from the right. With two strikers, it was the rebirth of the front four which started the club's current run of success in 2019. The difference was the injury to the outstanding Bruno Henrique – which opened up space for penalty-area specialist Pedro. The final was not his game. But he was the tournament top scorer with 12 goals – more than the entire Athletico team managed in the campaign.

Athletico had won the previous year's Copa Sudamericana. Their successors are Independiente del Valle, a remarkable club from Ecuador who had previously won the title in 2019. A tiny club from the outskirts of Quito, they exist to develop and sell players – but along the way they have seen that, with a shrewd eye for the market, they can also compete for honours. As they wait to blood the next generation of youth products, the current side is more experienced, and it was their Argentines who won the day against Sao Paulo of Brazil in the final.

Desperate for a first international title in a decade, Sao Paulo had the vast bulk of the support in the stadium in Cordoba, Argentina. But they had no answer to well-taken goals from Lautaro Diaz and man of the match Lorenzo Faravelli, and ended the game as a nine-man rabble. So in an age of increasing Brazilian domination, Independiente del Valle are a beacon of hope for the rest of the continent.

Flamengo ended the Libertadores campaign with the superb record of 12 wins and a draw, scoring 33 and conceding just eight

Dismissed...Athletico defender Pedro Henrique reacts after being sent off

Sudamericana champions...Ecuadorian outfit Independiente del Valle lift the trophy

Argentina

JOEL RICHARDS

Boca Juniors' title tarnished

After beating Racing Club to the title on a nail-biting final day, the Buenos Aires giants disgrace themselves in Champions Trophy final

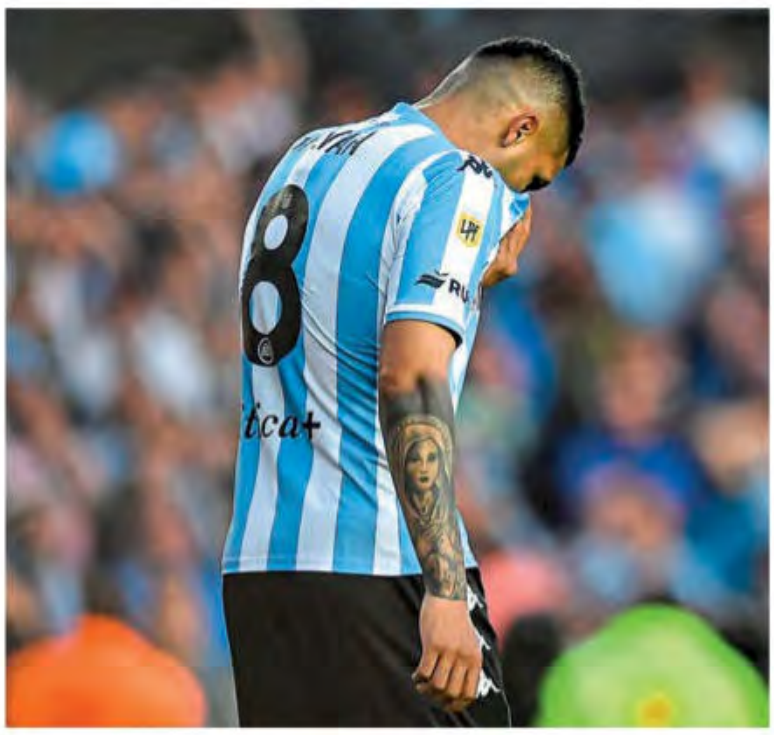
Argentina's season finale ended in scandal as the Champions Trophy between Boca Juniors and Racing Club resulted in three goals and 11 red cards.

The match was ultimately abandoned after World Cup referee Facundo Tello dismissed five Boca players, plus two of their substitutes, and coach Hugo Ibarra. Racing, for their part, had three men dismissed. The violence erupted after Carlos Alcaraz scored for Racing to make it 2-1 in extra-time before celebrating in front of the home fans, prompting fury from Boca's players.

The trophy pitches the winner of the year's two league competitions against each other. Boca had been crowned champions just two weeks before, having won the previous title in May, so their opponents were decided by a play-off. Racing defeated Tigre for the right to face Ibarra's men, who went into the final with the chance to stamp even more authority on the domestic game.

In winning the league in late October, the *Xeneize* have now won five of the last seven domestic league titles. "We won because we created a mystique," said Ibarra, who knows plenty about tradition and glory at the Bombonera: the former right-back was a mainstay in the Boca side that won four Copas Libertadores and an Intercontinental

Champions... Boca Juniors players lift the league trophy



Decisive...Racing's Jonathan Galvan reacts after seeing his penalty saved in the final game of the season v River Plate

Cup in the early 2000s. The current run of success does not match the glory days of 20 years ago, but Boca are the dominant force in Argentina right now.

Ibarra had been an emergency appointment in June, when Boca's season appeared to be in disarray. He replaced former team-mate Sebastian Battaglia in the dugout after the team crashed out of the Libertadores on penalties to Corinthians of Brazil.

The former reserve team coach lost three of his first five games, leaving Boca languishing in mid-table. Yet they went on to lose just one of their next 16 and lift the championship trophy.

This was a title won the "Boca way".

Boca are the dominant force in Argentina right now

In those 16 games, Ibarra's men never won by more than one goal. The side rarely found its rhythm or produced attractive football. Yet Ibarra forged a spirited team. Goalkeeper Agustin Rossi kept ten clean sheets, Alan Varela was key in midfield, while 20-year-old striker Luca Langoni displayed an impressive repertoire of finishing. With six goals he was Boca's top scorer – an impressive feat, which also demonstrated the champions' lack of firepower.

It was one of the tightest league championships in recent years. Atletico Tucuman spent 12 weeks top of the table, only conceding top spot to Boca with four games to go, before failing to win any of them and dropping down to fifth. Huracan also enjoyed one of their best seasons in recent years, with midfielder Franco Cristaldo standing out.

While Boca racked up the points, a few miles down the road in Avellaneda Racing Club crept up the table. Another former Boca player, Fernando Gago, was masterminding a sprint finish in the league that placed *La Academica* in contention for the title on the final day.

To add to the intrigue, the two title challengers faced each others' historic rivals on the last day: Boca hosted Independiente and Racing faced River Plate. But any conspiracy theories were soon brushed aside as Independiente first took the lead at the Bombonera and then equalised in a 2-2 draw.

When Racing won a penalty in the 90th minute, the celebrations at the Cilindro had all but begun. Jonathan Galvan stepped up, only to see River's keeper Franco Armani save his effort. River then finished off Racing in stoppage time to win 2-1, handing the title to their *Superclasico* rivals Boca.

Despair at Racing's Cilindro, fireworks at the Bombonera. It is the club's fifth title under the administration of legendary number ten Juan Roman Riquelme. Even the club's reserves and the women's team, *El Gladiadoras*, won their respective league titles as well, although the mood was soured by the events of the Champions Trophy.

Riquelme is now the central figure in Argentine football. He takes that mantle from Marcelo Gallardo who, after 14 trophies in eight years at River Plate, has stepped down as coach.

Gallardo transformed River and raised standards across the country, challenging on a continental level and winning two Copas Libertadores. This year, however, his side failed to respond.

A third-place finish in the table flattered River; they lost the derbies to Boca, were knocked out by Velez Sarsfield in the last 16 of the Libertadores, and only showed flashes of the attacking football that had defined Gallardo's brilliant era at the Monumental.

Also waving goodbye is San Lorenzo's Nestor Ortigoza, who retires with one of the best penalty records in the world, having scored 56 out of 60 spot-kicks.

Finally, this column could have taken a totally different shape after October's game between Gimnasia and Boca in La Plata was suspended after just nine minutes. Police fired tear gas at supporters, alleging overcrowding. Gimnasia refuted that, publishing figures of how many tickets were sold. In the ensuing chaos, a cameraman was shot with rubber bullets while filming the incidents and, tragically, 57-year-old supporter Cesar Regueiro died of "cardiorespiratory arrest."

It was only a week earlier that similar scenes had taken place in Indonesia, and many observers believe that Argentina only narrowly avoided a disaster on the same scale.

SEASON'S BEST

MANAGER OF THE YEAR
Hugo Ibarra (Boca Juniors)
His future is unclear after the Champions Trophy final, but the former reserve team coach proved his doubters wrong by winning the club's 35th league title.

Manager of the Year ...Ibarra

PLAYER OF THE YEAR
Mateo Retegui (Tigre)
On loan from Boca Juniors, the 23-year-old forward hit 19 goals to fire a recently-promoted Tigre side to seventh place in the table.

NEWCOMER OF THE YEAR
Luca Langoni (Boca Juniors)
While senior striker Dario Benedetto struggled for form, the 20-year-old youth-team forward stepped up to the plate.

Match suspended...Gimnasia y Esgrima La Plata players leave the pitch after being affected by tear gas deployed by police during their clash against eventual league champions Boca Juniors in October

United States

JAMES NALTON

Dramatic...Gareth Bale heads in LAFC's late equaliser

Los Angeles FC edge dramatic MLS Cup final

LAFC pull out all the stops to edge Philadelphia Union in a thrilling finale

Major League Soccer's 27th year was a tale of two standout teams. For much of the season, Los Angeles FC and Philadelphia Union could not be separated. After 34 league matches, two play-off games and a final between the pair that went to extra-time, a penalty shootout was eventually required to decide the overall champion in 2022.

The two clubs from opposite coasts had been the outstanding teams in the regular season, topping their respective conferences and battling it out for the Supporters' Shield.

LAFC eventually claimed the league leaders' shield due to MLS tiebreaker rules that prioritise total wins over goal difference. Both teams finished the season with 67 points from 34 games, but although Eastern Conference leaders Philadelphia Union scored more goals and conceded fewer, they only won 19 matches – two fewer than LAFC.

It is an unusual way to separate teams, and proved particularly harsh on the Union, but they got their shot at revenge when the two teams advanced to the MLS Cup final. Play-offs are not always won by the season's best team, but this was a rare occasion where the two undeniably best teams faced off for the title.

Challenge...LAFC keeper Maxime Crepeau collides with Cory Burke

It was the first time the two conference leaders had met in the final since San Jose Earthquakes defeated Chicago Fire back in 2003. This time, it was the perfect finale between two outstanding teams, each doing things their own way with contrasting styles, and they produced arguably the best MLS Cup final of all time.

The Union, led by head coach Jim Curtin, have the second-lowest wage bill in the league, but built an impressive team thanks to savvy scouting, youth development, and sound, consistent tactics in a 4-4-2 diamond formation.

Steve Cherundolo's LAFC, meanwhile, made headlines earlier in the season with the signings of Gareth Bale and Giorgio Chiellini. They joined an already talented roster that includes Carlos Vela, top goalscorer Cristian Arango, and 23-year-old Ecuadorian midfielder Jose Cifuentes.

Bale has enjoyed a relatively quiet campaign since arriving in LA last summer, but he more than made up for that in the final.

The Welshman joined the action in the seventh minute of extra-time with the scores level at 2-2. Not long before, Jesus Murillo thought he'd given LAFC the title by scoring in the 83rd minute, only for English defender Jack Elliott to equalise for the Union moments later.

Extra-time proved even more dramatic. First, a mistake by Murillo allowed Cory Burke a free run at goal. LAFC's Canadian goalkeeper Maxime Crepeau came rushing out to challenge the Jamaican and, in the collision, broke his own leg. To add insult to injury, Crepeau was then shown a red card for the challenge.

The long wait that was incurred by Crepeau's injury would prove significant, with nine minutes added on at the end of extra-time.

With 123 minutes on the clock, Union finally made their one-man advantage count when Elliott converted again, this time following a scrappy goalmouth scramble.

But the drama wasn't done there. Four minutes later Bale headed home to send the home crowd into raptures.

It was only his third goal of the campaign, and first since August, having only started two matches all season. Yet delivering in this vital moment made him worth every penny of LAFC's investment.

In the shootout, it was substitute goalkeeper John McCarthy's turn to make himself a hero for LAFC. The Philadelphia-born shot-stopper began his MLS career with his hometown club, where he established a reputation as a penalty specialist. In 2015, he helped Union win two shootouts en route to the Open Cup final, before coming off the bench at the end of extra-time in the final. This time however, his talent for penalty-saving was put to work against his old club, saving twice as LAFC lifted their first-ever MLS Cup.

Dejected...Philadelphia Union's Daniel Gazdag reacts after missing his penalty

Inevitably, Bale stole the headlines. Yet while older, big-name signings such as the Wales superstar still provide a boost to MLS's profile, they are no longer the stars of the show. These days, the league is as much about rising young stars as it is about last hurrahs for the game's greats – as the likes of Cifuentes and Kai Wagner, the Union's stand-out left-back, demonstrate.

In contrast, the league's other high-profile new arrivals proved far less successful than Bale. Xherdan Shaqiri at Chicago Fire and Lorenzo Insigne, who signed for Toronto FC, both failed to bring success to their teams as they finished 12th and 13th, respectively, in the Eastern Conference.

> This time, it was the perfect finale between two outstanding teams, each doing things their own way with contrasting styles, and they produced arguably the best MLS Cup final of all time

Only Wayne Rooney's D.C. United finished below them, with the Englishman facing a tough task of rebuilding the team ahead of 2023, having returned to D.C. halfway through the campaign to the club where he spent two seasons at the end of his playing career.

Over at Phil Neville's Inter Miami, whose mixed form was enough to reach the play-offs, another of the game's global stars, Gonzalo Higuain, decided to retire. Rumours abound that his replacement in Florida could be his former Argentina team-mate Lionel Messi, who has been linked with a move to the club owned by David Beckham.

Heroic...LAFC's John McCarthy celebrates saving Jose Martinez's shootout spot-kick

SEASON'S BEST

PLAYER OF THE YEAR
Hany Mukhtar (Nashville SC)
One of the standout players in MLS for the past two seasons, the German attacking midfielder, also eligible for Sudan, was deservedly named the league's MVP. His 23 goals were also enough to claim the MLS Golden Boot.

MANAGER OF THE YEAR
Jim Curtin (Philadelphia Union)
Wilfried Nancy of CF Montreal impressed, but the Union's clear tactical plan and camaraderie cultivated by head coach Curtin on a low budget helped them top their conference and reach their first MLS Cup final.

Manager of the Year... Jim Curtin

NEWCOMER OF THE YEAR
Thiago Almada (Atlanta United)
The Argentine's anticipated arrival brought entertaining attacking play and creativity. He impressed despite his new club not living up to expectations and failing to reach the play-offs.

18+

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Mexico

MARTIN DEL PALACIO LANGER

Pachuca sweep to Apertura title

Los Tuzos lift the trophy with a series of emphatic wins

Pachuca were deservedly crowned the champions of Liga MX's 2022 Apertura after obliterating Toluca in the most one-sided final in the last 20 years. With a core of young Mexican players, including internationals Kevin Alvarez, Luis Chavez and Erick Sanchez, backed up by illustrious veterans such as Oscar Ustari, Gustavo Cabral, Nico Ibanez and Aviles Hurtado, the side managed by Uruguayan Guillermo Almada conquered the country with their vertical, high-pressure style.

Despite this, Pachuca did not arrive as favourites to the play-offs that define the champions in Mexico. After 17 matchdays of the regular season, they had finished only in fourth place, but found their best moment of form in the final phase. This was in stark contrast to the previous season, when they topped the table in the regular season but ultimately lost against Atlas in the final.

The main favourites, in fact, were America, the most popular and most successful team in the country with 13 Liga MX titles. They arrived in the play-offs having led the regular season, backed up by an incredible streak of 11 wins in a row. That increased to 13 when they tore Puebla apart in the play-off quarter-finals round by an aggregate score of 11-2 (6-1 away and 5-1 at home).

Champions... Pachuca lift the trophy for the seventh time

Mistake...Mexico's Guillermo Ochoa cost America in the semi-finals

The final...Pachuca starlet Mauricio Isais celebrates scoring in the first leg v Toluca

Managed by the Argentine Fernando Ortiz, led by Spanish playmaker Alvaro Fidalgo – widely considered the player of the season – and with a squad that combines Mexican and South American internationals, they did not imagine that sixth-placed Toluca would cause them so much trouble in the semi-finals.

The reality, however, was different. A mistake by Mexico's first-choice goalkeeper Guillermo Ochoa in the first leg in Toluca was essential for the Red Devils' 2-1 victory. Then in the second leg, at the Azteca Stadium, the America forwards wasted a number of clear scoring opportunities before VAR confirmed their elimination by disallowing a goal in the last minute. The score finished 1-1, and Toluca advanced to the final.

In the other semi-final, Pachuca faced the other great favourites, Monterrey, who are also blessed with a number of internationals from all over the continent and are led by Victor Manuel Vucetich, the most successful coach in Mexican football. Yet they are also an ageing team and simply couldn't handle the hectic pace that Pachuca played at. The result was more or less settled in the first leg, with Pachuca sealing a 5-2 win with two late goals at home, before going on to win 1-0 away to seal the deal.

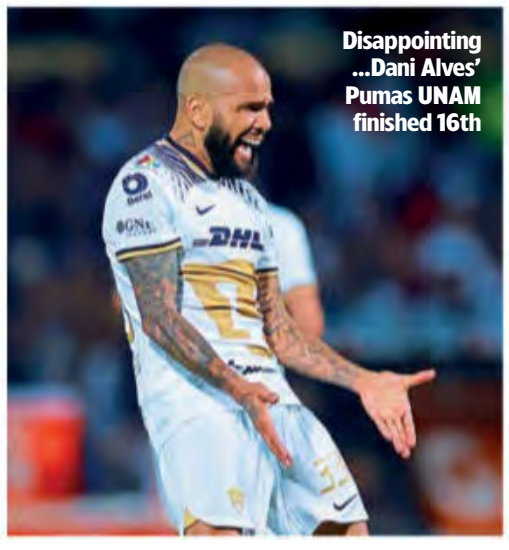
> An even match-up was expected; yet once again, Pachuca settled it in the first leg

Although a final between Pachuca and Toluca was actually unprecedented in Liga MX, they are both among the most successful clubs in the league's history. Before the confrontation, Pachuca had won the title six times and Toluca ten, so, historically, they were two sides used to playing in the highest stakes.

An even match-up was expected; yet once again, Pachuca settled it in the first leg. Before a packed Nemesio Diez Stadium in Toluca, the away side simply scored every chance they got. They ended the first half 4-0 up and, although Toluca made an effort to recover, could not possibly come back from the final 5-1 scoreline. The second leg ended 3-1, for an 8-2 aggregate win for Pachuca.

The victory was a seventh crown for a team that, despite limited resources and hailing from a relatively small city, has shown that it is possible to be successful with a serious and well-structured project. Their owner, Jesus Martinez, bought the club when it was still languishing in the second division in the mid-1990s, and has overseen all of their major titles since 1999 – including five CONCACAF Champions Leagues.

The tournament was also a resounding failure for the top Mexican football teams. America, the favourites, fell in the semi-finals; Cruz Azul went out in the quarter-finals; while Guadalajara and UNAM Pumas didn't even make the play-offs. In the case of the latter, the disappointment was even greater since they had made the two most exciting signings of the season: Brazilian legend Dani Alves and Argentine playmaker Eduardo Salvio. Although they both produced decent individual performances throughout the season, they couldn't prevent the team from finishing in a disastrous 16th place.



Disappointing ...Dani Alves' Pumas UNAM finished 16th

SEASON'S BEST

COACH OF THE YEAR
Guillermo Almada (Pachuca)
The Uruguayan coach solidified his status as one of the best in the league after winning the title in Mexico, three years after arriving to the country. He's now the main candidate to succeed Tata Martino at the Mexico helm after the World Cup.

Coach of the Year ...Almada

PLAYER OF THE YEAR
Alvaro Fidalgo (America)
Arrived without fanfare last year from the Spanish Second Division, the Real Madrid academy product was the catalyst of America's long unbeaten league run with his silky touch and amazing vision.

NEWCOMER OF THE YEAR
Mauricio Isais (Pachuca)
Came out of nowhere to become the starting left-back for the champions after Daniel Aceves left for Spain. He has the physique and work rate to move to Europe and become a mainstay in the Mexican National team after the World Cup.

Japan

MIKE PLASTOW

Winners... Yokohama F. Marinos celebrate with the J. League trophy

Title moves across Kanagawa

Yokohama F. Marinos reclaim the J. League title from local rivals Kawasaki Frontale

Yokohama F. Marinos won their fifth J. League championship and first since 2019 on the final day of the 2022 season. Just as in 2019, the success once again prevented their Kanagawa neighbours Kawasaki Frontale from winning three titles in a row.

This time around, Yokohama held an eight-point lead over Kawasaki with four games remaining and might have won the title with three games to spare. Yet consecutive defeats to struggling Gamba Osaka and Jubilo Iwata saw their lead whittled down to just two points, while Kawasaki maintained the pressure with four straight wins to the finish.

Yokohama made no mistake at the last though, cruising 4-1 at home to Champions League finalists Urawa Reds in their penultimate match and then 3-1 away to Vissel Kobe on the final day.

Yokohama won the league with the bright, attacking style introduced by Ange Postecoglou and now brought again to fruition by the Australian's old coaching colleague and later successor at Melbourne Victory, former Australia defender Kevin Muscat. Capped 46 times for the Socceroos and familiar to British fans from his spells at Crystal Palace, Wolverhampton Wanderers, Rangers and Millwall, Muscat took over in the middle of 2021 after Postecoglou moved to Celtic and has now more than made the team his own.

Yokohama play a high-pressure attacking game characterised by lightning switches from the back. This style depends, of course, on defensive solidity, which is provided notably by centre-backs Eduardo and Tomoki Iwata, hardworking captain Takuya Kida and Kota Watanabe in midfield, plus the ever-present Yohei Takaoka in goal.

When Yokohama sweep forward, they do so in numbers. Muscat has been spoilt for choice in the attack between five fine Brazilians, 2019 J. League Player of the Year Teruhito Nakagawa, and two of the season's most improved players: number ten Takuma Nishimura and right-winger Kota Mizunuma. The goals followed with remarkable even-handedness: 11 each for Anderson Lopes and Leo Ceara, ten for Nishimura, eight for Elber and seven for Mizunuma. In short, they could score from anywhere and often did.

The future looks bright for Yokohama too, with a number of highly promising youngsters coming through, particularly

Champions...Yokohama manager Kevin Muscat lifts the J. League trophy, his first title in Japan

20-year-old midfielder Joel Chima Fujita, who made his debut for Japan during July's East Asian Football Championship.

For Kawasaki, sealing a third straight title was always going to be difficult. Their success has attracted many talented youngsters, but it also turned them into a stepping-stone to bigger clubs. In 2021 they lost Ao Tanaka, Reo Hatate and Kaoru Mitoma; no club can keep shedding top players like this forever.

Yokohama F. Marinos won the league with the bright, attacking style introduced by Ange Postecoglou and now brought again to fruition by Kevin Muscat

The race was tight at the start. Kashima Antlers, playing under their first ever non-Brazilian foreign manager, Rene Weiler of Switzerland, mounted the most convincing challenge to the two Kanagawa giants in the first half of the season.

By the end of March, all of the early leaders had already lost once each – Kawasaki to Yokohama, Yokohama to Kashiwa Reysol, and Kashima to Kawasaki.

But Kashima's strong form only lasted until the departure of young centre-forward Ayase Ueda for Cercle Brugge in July. Ueda was top scorer in the league at that point with ten goals in 18 matches, but after he left Kashima looked bereft of ideas. Weiler, too, only lasted another month into August.

With Kashima slipping out of contention, Michael Skibbe's fast-improving Sanfrecce Hiroshima became the next team to challenge, and at one stage even took top spot – albeit briefly, having played more games than their rivals.

Their late finish was instead rewarded by two cup finals. In the Emperor's Cup, Hiroshima lost 5-4 on penalties after a 1-1 draw with second-tier side Ventforet Kofu, but lifted the J. League Cup after scoring two stoppage-time goals to defeat Cerezo Osaka 2-1.

Much was also expected of 2021 Emperor's Cup winners Urawa Reds in their second full season under Spaniard Ricardo Rodriguez. They started well enough with a 2-0 Super Cup win over Kawasaki, but later struggled for goals and never mounted the anticipated title challenge. Conversely, they produced their best in the AFC Champions League and will kick off their 2023 season in next February's final against the winners of the western region.

If Urawa's mid-table league form was disappointing, fellow Champions League representatives Vissel Kobe courted relegation almost all season until a late spurt eventually lifted them to safety.

The big Shizuoka clubs, Jubilo Iwata and Shimizu S-Pulse, filled the two automatic relegation slots. Curiously, Shimizu's line-up boasted Japan World Cup goalkeeper Shuichi Gonda and Thiago Santana, the league's top scorer with 14 goals. Yet it was not enough to avoid the drop.

Albirex Niigata and Yokohama FC will come up from the second division, while third-bottom Kyoto Sanga faced second-tier play-off winners Roasso Kumamoto in the promotion/relegation play-offs, which took place in mid-November.

Yokohama F. Marinos, Kawasaki Frontale and Ventforet Kofu will represent Japan in the 2023 AFC Champions League, with the play-off place going to either third-placed Hiroshima or Urawa if they win the 2022 trophy next February.

Rising star... Yokohama's Joel Chima Fujita on his Japan debut

SEASON'S BEST

MANAGER OF THE YEAR
Michael Skibbe
(Sanfrecce Hiroshima)
The veteran Dortmund, Frankfurt and Leverkusen manager turned Sanfrecce Hiroshima back into title contenders in his first year in charge, crediting their success to their attractive football.

PLAYER OF THE YEAR
Tomoki Iwata
(Yokohama F. Marinos)
The 25-year-old was a rock at the back for Yokohama, playing 32 matches and far more minutes than any other outfield player in the team. Joined in 2021 having played a key role in Oita Trinita's rise from the third to the first division from 2016 to 2019.

Player of the Year... Tomoki Iwata

NEWCOMER OF THE YEAR
Mao Hosoya (Kashiwa Reysol)
The 21-year-old Reysol youth product scored eight goals and created four more in 33 games for Kashiwa, with his impressive form earning him a first Japan cap. He made his senior debut against China in the East Asian Football Championship in July.

South Korea

JOHN DUERDEN

Ulsan end their title hoodoo

Jeonbuk Motors' era of dominance is finally brought to an end by Ulsan Hyundai

Finally, Ulsan Hyundai have shed their tag in South Korea as "chokers". The Tigers entered the final day of the 2019, 2020 and 2021 seasons in pole position, only to throw it all away and hand the trophy to Jeonbuk Hyundai Motors. Not this time as Ulsan clinched their first K League championship since 2005 on the penultimate weekend in October with a 2-1 win at Gangwon FC.

It was the first league title for head coach Hong Myung-bo. The captain of the 2002 World Cup team that reached the semi-final also coached the Olympic team to bronze in London 2012 and then was in charge of the national team at the 2014 World Cup. That campaign did not go well but the 53-year-old has returned to the top of Korean football and he was full of smiles as his players threw him into the air; he later said it was the best achievement of his coaching career.

For all at Ulsan, there was relief that the final step had been taken after the heartbreak of recent years. "Getting over this hump has not been easy. It just takes so much extra effort to overcome the kind of mental blocks that we had," Hong said. "I want Ulsan to be the K League leaders in every aspect. We don't just want to throw money at expensive players. I want to build a contender with a strong foundation."

The big moment came on October 8. Ulsan's lead over an in-form Jeonbuk had shrunk to just five points ahead of their meeting and nerves were jangling that history could repeat itself, a feeling heightened when the Motors took a first-half lead that they held deep into added time. Then, in the 97th minute, came a handball in the area that the referee missed but VAR didn't. Hungarian international Martin Adam stepped up and kept his cool to send the fans wild and had some in tears.

Yet, incredibly, that wasn't the end

Champions...Hong Myung-bo lifts the K League trophy with his team
Credit: Alamy

Decisive...Martin Adam celebrates his brace against Jeonbuk
Credit: Instagram@ ulsanhyundaifootballclub

of it. Three minutes later, the same player headed home a corner to cause absolute bedlam. Suddenly a gap at the top that had looked like being cut to two points with three games left had become eight and the title was as good as won – not even Ulsan could throw this away.

If coach Hong has impressed on the sidelines then so has his lieutenant on the pitch. One of his best decisions was handing the captaincy to former Bolton Wanderers and Crystal Palace winger Lee Chung-yong. Lee managed just two goals and two assists in the season but was still a major influence.

"Just because a player doesn't have a lot of goals or assists, it doesn't mean that player doesn't deserve to be the MVP," Hong said. "If you look at the big picture, Lee Chung-yong has played a tremendous role in helping us win the title. And MVPs have usually come from championship teams. He should absolutely be the MVP. He has been the spiritual leader and role model for everyone here."

Jeonbuk had won the five previous titles but will have to settle for second, the Korean FA Cup (thanks to a 5-3 aggregate victory over two legs against FC Seoul) and a place in the 2023-24 Asian Champions League. Pohang Steelers pipped Ulsan to the 2013 title but have yet to finish in the top two since and ended up third, though usual relegation battlers Incheon United will be delighted with a fourth-placed finish.

> **"Getting over this hump has not been easy. It just takes so much extra effort to overcome the kind of mental blocks that we had"**
> Ulsan Hyundai head coach Hong Myung-bo

Instead, there were some big names at the bottom, where the 12th-placed side went straight down while the two teams above went into a two-legged play-off to preserve their top-flight status.

Seongnam FC have won the Asian Champions League on two occasions, most recently in 2010, yet they were resigned to finishing last and going down to K League 2 some time before the end of the season.

Only a few places higher were FC Seoul and Suwon Samsung Bluewings, who were arguably the two biggest teams in the country a decade ago, with the former reaching the Champions League final in 2013 and the latter reaching the last four in 2018. Yet this season they only narrowly avoided relegation. Seoul took ninth, with Suwon just two points and one place below them. They survived their relegation play-off against second-tier FC Anyang, but only thanks to a goal in the last minute of extra-time.

In the other play-off, army team Gimcheon Sangmu went down after being soundly beaten 6-1 over two legs by Daejeon Citizen, who now return to the K League 1 along with second-tier champions Gwangju FC.

Runners-up...Jeonbuk Hyundai Motors did reach the Asian Champions League semi-finals

SEASON'S BEST

COACH OF THE YEAR
Hong Myung-bo (Ulsan Hyundai)
After recent disappointments, Ulsan barely put a foot wrong from the start to the end under the determined but calm Hong, one of Asian football's biggest legends.

PLAYER OF THE YEAR
Lee Chung-yong (Ulsan Hyundai)
Now the elder statesman in the K League after his exploits in England, Lee is not the tricky winger of old but an intelligent and composed leader on the pitch who makes Ulsan tick.

Player of the Year...Lee Chung-yong

NEWCOMER OF THE YEAR
Yang Hyun-jun (Gangwon FC)
The 20-year-old midfielder scored eight goals and won four Young Player of the Month prizes as Gangwon equalled their best-ever league finish of sixth place.

Africa

MARK GLEESON

Holders...Wydad Casablanca safely advanced to the group stage

CAF Champions League

Sixteen teams make it to the group stage of Africa's premier club competition

The ominous-sounding Vipers FC from Uganda are the only newcomers in this season's 16-team line-up for the African Champions League with an all too familiar field battling it out for honours.

Half of them are past winners of the continent's top club prize and there is again a majority representation from the Arabic-speaking north, with nine clubs to seven from south of the Sahara.

The draw for the group phase took place on the eve of the World Cup finals, giving clubs plenty of time to prepare before the group phase gets underway in February.

Seven of last season's eight quarter-finalists return, headed by holders Wydad and their fierce rivals Raja from Casablanca in Morocco; the Egyptian giants Al Ahly and Zamalek; and Esperance from Tunisia who, like Al Ahly, will now compete in the group phase for the 20th time since it was introduced in 1997.

All of the fancied sides romped through the second preliminary round with South Africa's Mamelodi Sundowns almost setting a new record aggregate score as they dispatched La Passe of the Seychelles 15-1 on aggregate – two short of Tanzanian side Pamba Sports' 17-1 aggregate victory over Seychellois club Anse Boileau in the 1990 African Cup Winners' Cup.

The one-sided nature of the contest between Sundowns, one of the continent's richest teams owned by CAF president Patrice Motsepe, and a selection of part-timers from Africa's smallest country was tilted even further in Sundowns' favour by the fact that they "hosted" both legs.

Mamelodi Sundowns... the South African side demolished La Passe

South Africa's Mamelodi Sundowns almost set a new record aggregate score as they dispatched La Passe of the Seychelles 15-1 on aggregate

Renovations mean there are no suitable stadiums in the Seychelles, whose clubs and national team have been hosting home matches on the island of Mauritius, more than 1,000km away. Sundowns offered La Passe the cheaper option of playing in Pretoria and so they "hosted" the first leg, which they lost 7-0 with Sundowns taking the return 8-1, including a hat-trick from debutant Cassius Mailula.

Zamalek also had a similar arrangement with Flambeau du Centre from Burundi, where the stadium is also banned for use in CAF competition because of poor facilities. But the Cairo club were far less convincing in winning 6-1 on aggregate, although winger Ahmed Zizo did get a hat-trick.

Vipers won their place after a goalless tie against TP Mazembe of the Democratic Republic of Congo, who are a club in decline despite winning the Champions League three times in the past 14 years. The Ugandans advanced on post-match penalties after the return leg in Lubumbashi, with Mazembe's French coach Franck Dumas, a former Newcastle United defender, being fired on the spot. Kampala Capital City Authority are the only other Ugandan side to have reached the group phase.

There was controversy and consternation as Esperance squeezed through on the away goals rule against Plateau United from Nigeria. The Tunisian giants, winners in 2018 and 2019, were 2-1 down after the first leg away in Abuja but a controversial penalty seven minutes from the end of the second leg – converted by Mohamed Ali Ben Romdhane – earned them a 1-0 win and narrow passage to the group phase, despite the furious protests of their visitors.

Nigeria's other representatives, Rivers United, also threatened an upset after beat holders Wydad 2-1 in the first leg of their tie in Port Harcourt. But new Senegal striker Bouly Sambou led the way as Wydad were convincing 6-0 winners at home in the return. Walid Regragui, who took Wydad to the title in May, is now taking Morocco to the World Cup finals and Wydad have replaced him with Houssaine Ammouta, back for a second spell with the club.

Al Ahly also had a new manager in charge as they beat US Monastir of Tunisia over two legs. It was the first two games in charge for the 62-year-old Swiss Marcel Koller, who was Austria's manager for six years.

Angola's Petro Atletico, surprise semi-finalists last season, sent out a warning of their ability to do it again as they beat Cape Town City from South Africa 3-0 away in the first leg of their second-round tie. Petro then won 1-0 at home in the return, too, with Brazilians Gleison, Tiago Azulao, Wellington and William Soares, and Portuguese defender Pedro Pinto continuing to be integral to their chances. They have all been given Angolan passports, too.

The group phase will be played through February and March with the top two in each group advancing to quarter-finals in April. The final will revert to a two-legged affair in June.

Hat-trick hero... Zamalek winger Ahmed Zizo

India

SAMINDRA KUNTI

Hosts humiliated at the Women's U17 World Cup

Flaws in Indian football exposed by tournament on home soil

It was *déjà vu*. After 180 minutes, the party and the dream were over: India's Under-17 women's team were out of the World Cup on home soil. In Bhubaneswar, the supporters, the flags and the DJ were all there, but India's team was exposed. The manner of the elimination was grating; an 8-0 loss to the United States in the curtain-raiser was deflating at all levels and indicative of what the rest of the tournament would be about – damage limitation. Against Morocco, the hosts restricted their opponents to just three goals; against Brazil, they woefully shipped another five.

India were comprehensively outplayed, without even facing the tournament's best sides. USA and Brazil advanced from Group A to the quarter-finals, where they were beaten by Nigeria (on penalties) and Germany respectively.

Crashed out...India players acknowledge their supporters after their final game

New AIFF president...Kalyan Chaubey

Champions...Spain lift the trophy after defeating Colombia 1-0 in the World Cup Under-17 final in Mumbai

Five years ago, India's boys exited the U17 World Cup at home after defeats against the USA and Colombia. Jeakson Singh did get a consolation goal at least, leading to national headlines in the domestic press, and elements of India's play were constructive and encouraging. Following an intense training camp, the team had been sent on exposure trips around the world, but the early exit was a stinging indictment of India's lack of grassroots development; franchises in the Indian Super League, the country's top flight, have invested precious little in youth academies.

The girls' team followed the same roadmap during an intense eight-month training camp and 250 sessions. They were sent to practise in Norway, Spain and Italy, but meaningful matches were rare. The majority of squad members had not played any international football before India's match with the USA, the gold standard in the women's game.

The outcome in the form of a damaging 8-0 scoreline was entirely predictable. Journalist and long-time observer of the Indian game Vishnu Prasad noted that the "AIFF [All India Football Federation] is like that father who walked out on his kid when it was born, then showed up a week before the 17th birthday and said: 'Let's go to Disneyland and make sure you have a memorable childhood!'"

The governing body had scrambled to assemble a team, staging trials in Manipur, Haryana, Tamil Nadu and Mangalore among others, but ultimately a bunch of teenage girls from the interior of Jharkhand could not disguise Indian football's complete dysfunction with a ruling body in turmoil and no grassroots programmes. The vast majority of Indian states do not organise youth leagues for girls while the top flight at the senior level runs just a few weeks a year. In August, Gokulam Kerala, India's best club, had to forfeit participation in the Asian Women's Club Championship after the AIFF was suspended by FIFA.

Following the exit of long-standing strongman Praful Patel, a FIFA Council member, from the Indian apex body, FIFA banned the AIFF for third-party interference. The punishment initially meant that India was stripped of the tournament's hosting rights, before the country's supreme court repelled the committee of administrators and handed power back to the AIFF. The world federation moved to welcome the Indians back to the football fraternity and so the AIFF retained the tournament.

The hosts were comprehensively outplayed, without even facing the tournament's best sides

A week later, Kalyan Chaubey, a member of the BJP, India's Hindu-nationalist ruling party, succeeded Patel, unperturbed by accusations of political interference: "Can you name a federation where the government, or a party, or a politician is not a part of the federation?"

Poor governance and the reality of India's market economy have not helped Indian women's football, but the AIFF's top-down approach of hosting major international tournaments in a bid to prompt interest and development is slowly beginning to be questioned in the body's own circles.

"We are working on the Indian football Strategic Roadmap which would clearly specify our strategic goals and priorities for the next four years," said AIFF general secretary Shaji Prabhakaran. "However, the new team at AIFF will certainly have a different approach to developing football which would be along global lines and moreover, focusing on developing a robust domestic competitive structure for women's football and increasing participation of girls at the grassroots level."

Building a proper ecosystem for girls as well as boys is imperative for the domestic game to progress, because Indian football has little to savour apart from Jeakson Singh's goal and the delusion that it's going somewhere.

That need for a grassroots level participation was demonstrated by Spain. They retained their title in Mumbai by defeating Colombia in the final 1-0. With their incisive playing style, Spain battled their way to the title, finishing second to Colombia in Group C after losing to Mexico before winning all their knockout matches with late goals, including the final. But overall they were deserved winners, showing the hosts how successful a team can be when youth development is properly valued.

Guadeloupe

STEVE MENARY

Outside FIFA's family

CONCACAF membership for Guadeloupe has failed to translate into recognition from football's global body

Nine years after being made a full member of CONCACAF, Guadeloupe's international aspirations remain held back by being unable to join other remnants of France's empire, such as Tahiti and New Caledonia, in joining FIFA.

Guadeloupe is one of the more competitive Caribbean islands, reaching the CONCACAF Gold Cup semi-finals in 2007 and the final of the 2010 Caribbean Championship despite a raft of obstacles.

The best players are routinely creamed off by France; 1998 World Cup winner Lilian Thuram and Jocelyn Angloma, a European Cup winner with Marseille, were both born in the Caribbean territory. Indeed, Guadeloupe's lack of FIFA membership meant that the latter was able to play for the country of his birth at the end of his career, despite winning 37 caps for France, and was instrumental in them reaching the semi-finals of both the Gold Cup and Caribbean Cup in 2007.

Now, the 57-year-old Angloma is back and coaching the team, who won promotion from League C of the inaugural Nations League in 2019-20 without dropping a point. In the current Nations League, Guadeloupe lie second behind Cuba in their group in League B, with a real chance of promotion despite not always being able to call up the best players from overseas.

ABOVE: Non-FIFA members ...Guadeloupe players ahead of a Gold Cup qualifier

"Not being a FIFA full member, the clubs don't have the obligation to release the players. Thus, we have difficulties to get our best players who play in France and in the others big international championships," says Fabrice Thomas-Babel, general manager at the Guadeloupean League of Football (LGF).

There are 122 registered clubs in Guadeloupe and 89 are currently active and playing in three divisions, but no one earns a full-time living from playing football.

Commercial income is low and tickets for the recent cup final, where Amical beat Solidarite Scolaire 4-2 on penalties after a 1-1 draw, were just €10 but the 6,000-capacity Rene Serge Nabajoth Stadium was not full as the game was played midweek.

Each of the top-division sides can employ up to five players on a part-time basis, but to make a living from football players must move overseas. The LGF has two elite programmes that work with clubs in France: Pole Espoirs for juniors (Under-14 and Under-15), and CERFA for Under-16 to Under-18 players.

A raft of players play professionally abroad, such as Dimitri Cavare and Andreaw Gravillon, who play for Swiss side Sion and Reims in France's Ligue 1 respectively having both been born in Pointe-a-Pitre, the second-biggest city in Guadeloupe.

Angloma also calls on a number of French-born players, but Guadeloupe are not playing under the same rules as their rivals. CONCACAF has committed to providing financial help to all of their six members that are not yet in FIFA, but achieving that membership remains the LGF's goal.

"Reaching the status of full member, to be integrated in the FIFA ranking and to have more incentive to convince the pro clubs to release their players to us, would be very, very big progress," says Thomas-Babel.

Guadeloupe are not alone in the Caribbean. Fellow French territories French Guiana and Martinique also became full CONCACAF members in 2013 but remain outside FIFA. They face the same problems and also want a solution.

> "Not being a FIFA full member, the clubs don't have the obligation to release the players. Thus, we have difficulties to get our best players"
>
> Fabrice Thomas-Babel, Guadeloupean League of Football

The manager... Jocelyn Angloma

The LGF says it is working with CONCACAF and the French federation but the problem lies outside football. "Our institutional status within France makes things complex and is probably the biggest difficulty and we are aware of it," adds Thomas-Babel, who believes a solution lies in "thinking outside the box" but is unsure where that may lead.

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LA LIGA 2022-23

ALMERIA

GOALKEEPERS

1	Fernando **PACHECO**	(30) 18.05.92
13	**FERNANDO**	(32) 10.06.90
25	Diego **FUOLI**	(25) 20.10.97

DEFENDERS

2	**KAIKY** (Bra)	(18) 12.01.04
15	Sergio **AKIEME** (Eqg)	(24) 16.12.97
17	Alejandro **POZO**	(23) 22.02.99
19	Rodrigo **ELY** (Ita)	(29) 03.11.93
20	Alex **CENTELLES**	(23) 30.08.99
21	**CHUMI**	(23) 02.03.99
22	Srdjan **BABIC** (Srb)	(26) 22.04.96
24	Houboulang **MENDES** (Fra)	(24) 04.05.98

MIDFIELDERS

3	Gonzalo **MELERO**	(28) 02.01.94
4	Inigo **EGUARAS**	(30) 07.03.92
5	Lucas **ROBERTONE** (Arg)	(25) 18.03.97
6	**CESAR**	(30) 30.03.92
8	Francisco **PORTILLO**	(32) 13.06.90
18	Arnau **PUIGMAL**	(21) 10.01.01
23	**SAMU** (Por)	(21) 27.11.00
26	Martin **SVIDERSKY** (Svk)	(20) 04.10.02
28	Guilherme **GUEDES** (Por)	(20) 17.04.02

FORWARDS

7	Largie **RAMAZANI** (Bel)	(21) 27.02.01
9	El Bilal **TOURE** (Mli)	(21) 03.10.01
10	Adrian **EMBARBA**	(30) 07.05.92
11	Dyego **SOUSA** (Por)	(33) 14.09.89
12	**LEO BAPTISTAO** (Bra)	(30) 26.08.92
14	**LAZARO** (Bra)	(20) 12.03.02
16	Marko **MILOVANOVIC** (Srb)	(19) 04.08.03
33	Carlos **ROJAS**	(20) 18.04.02

COACH

RUBI	(52) 05.02.70

ATHLETIC BILBAO

GOALKEEPERS

1	Unai **SIMON**	(25) 11.06.97
13	Julen **AGIRREZABALA**	(21) 26.12.00
27	Alex **PADILLA**	(19) 01.09.03
35	Ander **IRU**	(24) 22.08.98

DEFENDERS

3	Daniel **VIVIAN**	(23) 05.07.99
4	Inigo **MARTINEZ**	(31) 17.05.91
5	**YERAY**	(27) 24.01.95
15	Inigo **LEKUE**	(29) 04.05.93
17	Yuri **BERCHICHE**	(32) 10.02.90
18	Oscar **DE MARCOS**	(33) 14.04.89
21	Ander **CAPA**	(30) 08.02.92
24	Mikel **BALENZIAGA**	(34) 29.02.88
31	Aitor **PAREDES**	(22) 29.04.00

MIDFIELDERS

6	Mikel **VESGA**	(29) 08.04.93
8	Oihan **SANCET**	(22) 25.04.00
14	Dani **GARCIA**	(32) 24.05.90
16	Unai **VENCEDOR**	(22) 15.11.00
19	Oier **ZARRAGA**	(23) 04.01.99
23	Ander **HERRERA**	(33) 14.08.89

FORWARDS

2	Jon **MORCILLO**	(24) 15.09.98
7	Alex **BERENGUER**	(27) 04.07.95
9	Inaki **WILLIAMS** (Gha)	(28) 15.06.94
10	Iker **MUNIAIN**	(29) 19.12.92
11	Nico **WILLIAMS**	(20) 12.07.02
12	Gorka **GURUZETA**	(26) 12.09.96
20	Asier **VILLALIBRE**	(25) 30.09.97
22	Raul **GARCIA**	(36) 11.07.86
28	Luis **BILBAO**	(19) 24.03.03
29	Malcom **ARES**	(21) 12.10.01

COACH

Ernesto **VALVERDE**	(58) 09.02.64

ATLETICO MADRID

GOALKEEPERS

1	Ivo **GRBIC** (Cro)	(26) 18.01.96
13	Jan **OBLAK** (Svn)	(29) 07.01.93
31	Antonio **GOMIS**	(19) 20.05.03
51	Sergio **MESTRE**	(17) 13.02.05

DEFENDERS

2	Jose **GIMENEZ** (Uru)	(27) 20.01.95
3	Sergio **REGUILON**	(25) 16.12.96
15	Stefan **SAVIC** (Mne)	(31) 08.01.91
16	Nahuel **MOLINA** (Arg)	(24) 06.04.98
18	Felipe **MONTEIRO** (Bra)	(33) 16.05.89
22	Mario **HERMOSO**	(27) 18.06.95
23	**REINILDO** (Moz)	(28) 21.01.94
30	Sergio **DIEZ**	(19) 28.07.03
36	Marco **MORENO**	(21) 20.02.01
38	Fran **GONZALEZ**	(24) 13.08.98
47	Ibrahima **CAMARA**	(19) 18.01.03
48	Adrian **CORRAL**	(19) 05.01.03

MIDFIELDERS

4	Geoffrey **KONDOGBIA** (Cta)	(29) 15.02.93
5	Rodrigo **DE PAUL** (Arg)	(28) 24.05.94
6	**KOKE**	(30) 08.01.92
11	Thomas **LEMAR** (Fra)	(27) 12.11.95
14	Marcos **LLORENTE**	(27) 30.01.95
17	**SAUL**	(28) 21.11.94
20	Axel **WITSEL** (Bel)	(33) 12.01.89
21	Yannick **CARRASCO** (Bel)	(29) 04.09.93
32	Alberto **MORENO**	(20) 19.04.02

FORWARDS

7	Joao **FELIX** (Por)	(23) 10.11.99
8	Antoine **GRIEZMANN** (Fra)	(31) 21.03.91
9	**MATHEUS CUNHA** (Bra)	(23) 27.05.99
10	Angel **CORREA** (Arg)	(27) 09.03.95
19	Alvaro **MORATA**	(30) 23.10.92
29	Carlos **MARTIN**	(20) 22.04.02

COACH

Diego **SIMEONE** (Arg)	(52) 28.04.70

BARCELONA

GOALKEEPERS

1	Marc-Andre **TER STEGEN** (Ger)	(30) 30.04.92
26	Inaki **PENA**	(23) 02.03.99
36	Arnau **TENAS**	(21) 30.05.01

DEFENDERS

2	Hector **BELLERIN**	(27) 19.03.95
4	Ronald **ARAUJO** (Uru)	(23) 07.03.99
15	Andreas **CHRISTENSEN** (Den)	(26) 10.04.96
17	Marcos **ALONSO**	(31) 28.12.90
18	Jordi **ALBA**	(33) 21.03.89
23	Jules **KOUNDE** (Fra)	(24) 12.11.98
24	Eric **GARCIA**	(21) 09.01.01
28	Alex **BALDE**	(19) 18.10.03
35	Chadi **RIAD** (Mar)	(19) 17.06.03

MIDFIELDERS

5	Sergio **BUSQUETS**	(34) 16.07.88
8	**PEDRI**	(20) 25.11.02
19	Franck **KESSIE** (Civ)	(25) 19.12.96
20	Sergi **ROBERTO**	(30) 07.02.92
21	Frenkie **DE JONG** (Ned)	(25) 12.05.97
29	Marc **CASADO**	(19) 14.09.03
30	**GAVI**	(18) 05.08.04
32	Pablo **TORRE**	(19) 03.04.03

FORWARDS

7	Ousmane **DEMBELE** (Fra)	(25) 15.05.97
9	Robert **LEWANDOWSKI** (Pol)	(34) 21.08.88
10	Ansu **FATI**	(20) 31.10.02
11	Ferran **TORRES**	(22) 29.02.00
14	Memphis **DEPAY** (Ned)	(28) 13.02.94
22	**RAPHINHA** (Bra)	(25) 14.12.96
37	Ilias **AKHOMACH**	(18) 16.04.04

COACH

XAVI	(42) 25.01.80

CADIZ

GOALKEEPERS

1	Jeremias **LEDESMA** (Arg)	(29) 13.02.93
13	David **GIL**	(28) 11.01.94
26	Victor **AZNAR** (Bra)	(20) 17.10.02

DEFENDERS

2	Joseba **ZALDUA**	(30) 24.06.92
3	**FALI**	(29) 12.08.93
5	Momo **MBAYE** (Sen)	(24) 28.06.98
16	**CALA**	(32) 26.11.89
20	**IZA**	(29) 23.04.93
21	Santiago **ARZAMENDIA** (Par)	(24) 05.05.98
22	Alfonso **ESPINO** (Uru)	(30) 05.01.92
23	Luis **HERNANDEZ**	(33) 14.04.89
32	Victor **CHUST**	(22) 05.03.00
35	**KIKIN**	(19) 20.01.03

MIDFIELDERS

4	Ruben **ALCARAZ**	(31) 01.05.91
6	Jose **MARI**	(34) 06.12.87
8	**ALEX**	(30) 15.10.92
12	Tomas **ALARCON** (Chi)	(23) 19.01.99
24	**FEDE**	(25) 16.03.97
28	Curro **MUNOZ**	(19) 07.01.03
30	**BASTIDA**	(18) 12.05.04
33	Karl Etta **EYONG** (Cmr)	(19) 14.10.03
36	Antonio **BLANCO**	(22) 23.07.00

FORWARDS

7	Ruben **SOBRINO**	(30) 01.06.92
9	Choco **LOZANO** (Hon)	(29) 25.04.93
10	Theo **BONGONDA** (Cod)	(27) 20.11.95
11	Ivan **ALEJO**	(27) 10.02.95
14	Brian **OCAMPO** (Uru)	(23) 25.06.99
15	Lucas **PEREZ**	(34) 10.09.88
17	Awer **MABIL** (Aus)	(27) 15.09.95
18	Alvaro **NEGREDO**	(37) 20.08.85
19	Alvaro **GIMENEZ**	(31) 19.05.91
29	Mamady **DIARRA** (Mli)	(22) 26.06.00

COACH

SERGIO	(46) 10.11.76

CELTA VIGO

GOALKEEPERS

1	Agustin **MARCHESIN** (Arg)	(34) 16.03.88
13	Ivan **VILLAR**	(25) 09.07.97
27	Raul **GARCIA**	(22) 27.01.00

DEFENDERS

2	Hugo **MALLO**	(31) 22.06.91
3	Oscar **MINGUEZA**	(23) 13.05.99
4	Unai **NUNEZ**	(25) 30.01.97
15	Joseph **AIDOO** (Gha)	(27) 29.09.95
17	Javi **GALAN**	(28) 19.11.94
20	Kevin **VAZQUEZ**	(29) 23.03.93
26	Carlos **DOMINGUEZ**	(21) 11.02.01

MIDFIELDERS

5	**OSCAR**	(24) 28.06.98
6	Denis **SUAREZ**	(28) 06.01.94
8	Fran **BELTRAN**	(23) 03.02.99
11	Franco **CERVI** (Arg)	(28) 26.05.94
14	Renato **TAPIA** (Per)	(27) 28.07.95
19	Williot **SWEDBERG** (Swe)	(18) 01.02.04
21	Augusto **SOLARI** (Arg)	(30) 03.01.92
23	Luca de la **TORRE** (USA)	(24) 23.05.98
28	Gabri **VEIGA**	(20) 27.05.02

FORWARDS

7	Carles **PEREZ**	(24) 16.02.98
9	Goncalo **PACIENCIA** (Por)	(28) 01.08.94
10	Iago **ASPAS**	(35) 01.08.87
18	Jorgen Strand **LARSEN** (Nor)	(22) 06.02.00
29	Miguel **RODRIGUEZ**	(19) 29.04.03
32	Fran **LOPEZ**	(20) 24.01.02
35	Pablo **DURAN**	(21) 25.05.01

COACH

Carlos **CARVALHAL** (Por)	(56) 04.12.65

ELCHE

GOALKEEPERS

1	Axel **WERNER** (Arg)	(26) 28.02.96
13	Edgar **BADIA**	(30) 12.02.92
28	Jesus **LOPEZ**	(20) 01.08.02

DEFENDERS

2	Federico **FERNANDEZ** (Arg)	(33) 21.02.89
3	Enzo **ROCO** (Chi)	(30) 16.08.92
4	Diego **GONZALEZ**	(27) 28.01.95
5	Gonzalo **VERDU**	(34) 21.10.88
6	Pedro **BIGAS**	(32) 15.05.90
14	Helibelton **PALACIOS** (Col)	(29) 11.06.93
22	Nicolas **FERNANDEZ** (Arg)	(22) 11.01.00
23	Carlos **CLERC**	(30) 21.02.92
24	Pol **LIROLA**	(25) 13.08.97
26	**JOHN**	(22) 30.08.00

MIDFIELDERS

7	Javier **PASTORE** (Arg)	(33) 20.06.89
8	Raul **GUTI**	(25) 30.12.96
12	Domingos **QUINA** (Por)	(23) 18.11.99
15	Alex **COLLADO**	(23) 22.04.99
20	Gerard **GUMBAU**	(27) 18.12.94
21	Omar **MASCARELL**	(29) 02.02.93
32	Alejandro **ALFARO**	(20) 15.06.02

FORWARDS

9	Lucas **BOYE** (Arg)	(26) 28.02.96
10	Pere **MILLA**	(30) 23.09.92
11	Tete **MORENTE**	(25) 04.12.96
16	**FIDEL**	(33) 27.10.89
17	**JOSAN**	(32) 03.12.89
18	Roger **MARTI**	(31) 03.01.91
19	Ezequiel **PONCE** (Arg)	(25) 29.03.97

COACH

Vacant	

ESPANYOL

GOALKEEPERS

1	Joan **GARCIA**	(21) 04.05.01
13	Benjamin **LECOMTE** (Fra)	(31) 26.04.91
25	Alvaro **FERNANDEZ**	(24) 13.04.98
34	Angel **FORTUNO**	(21) 05.10.01

DEFENDERS

2	Oscar **GIL**	(24) 26.04.98
3	Adria **PEDROSA**	(24) 13.05.98
4	Leandro **CABRERA** (Uru)	(31) 17.06.91
5	Fernando **CALERO**	(27) 14.09.95
14	Brian **OLIVAN**	(28) 01.04.94
22	Aleix **VIDAL**	(33) 21.08.89
24	Sergi **GOMEZ**	(30) 28.03.92
26	El **HILALI** (Mar)	(19) 12.09.03
27	Ruben **SANCHEZ**	(21) 09.01.01
28	**SIMO**	(17) 03.02.05

MIDFIELDERS

6	Pol **LOZANO**	(23) 06.10.99
8	Keidi **BARE** (Alb)	(25) 28.08.97
10	Sergi **DARDER**	(28) 22.12.93
12	**VINICIUS SOUZA** (Bra)	(23) 17.06.99
16	Jose Carlos **LAZO**	(26) 16.02.96
20	Edu **EXPOSITO**	(26) 01.08.96
31	Dani **VILLAHERMOSA**	(21) 02.01.01

FORWARDS

7	Javi **PUADO**	(24) 25.05.98
9	**JOSELU**	(32) 27.03.90
17	Martin **BRAITHWAITE** (Den)	(31) 05.06.91
19	Dani **GOMEZ**	(24) 30.07.98
21	Nico **MELAMED**	(21) 11.04.01
30	Luca **KOLEOSHO** (Can)	(18) 15.09.04
32	Nabil **TOUAIZI** (Mar)	(21) 01.02.01

COACH

Diego **MARTINEZ**	(41) 16.12.80

GETAFE

GOALKEEPERS

1	Kiko **CASILLA**	(36) 02.10.86
13	David **SORIA**	(29) 04.04.93
27	Diego **CONDE**	(24) 28.10.98
33	Vicente **BELLMUNT**	(22) 28.01.00

DEFENDERS

2	**DJENE** (Tog)	(30) 31.12.91
3	Fabrizio **ANGILERI** (Arg)	(28) 15.03.94
4	Gaston **ALVAREZ** (Uru)	(22) 24.03.00
6	Domingos **DUARTE** (Por)	(27) 10.03.95
12	Jordan **AMAVI** (Fra)	(28) 09.03.94
15	Omar **ALDERETE** (Par)	(25) 26.12.96
21	Juan **IGLESIAS**	(24) 03.07.98
22	Damian **SUAREZ** (Uru)	(34) 27.04.88
23	Stefan **MITROVIC** (Srb)	(32) 22.05.90
29	Gorka **RIVERA**	(18) 01.08.04
31	Alex **REVUELTA**	(22) 16.04.00
32	Alex **RODRIGUEZ**	(20) 21.03.02

MIDFIELDERS

5	Luis **MILLA**	(28) 07.10.94
8	Jaime **SEOANE**	(25) 22.01.97
9	**PORTU**	(30) 21.05.92
11	Carles **ALENA**	(24) 05.01.98
16	Angel **ALGOBIA**	(23) 23.06.99
18	Mauro **ARAMBARRI** (Uru)	(27) 30.09.95
20	Nemanja **MAKSIMOVIC** (Srb)	(27) 26.01.95

FORWARDS

7	Jaime **MATA**	(34) 24.10.88
10	Enes **UNAL** (Tur)	(25) 10.05.97
14	Juanmi **LATASA**	(21) 23.03.01
17	**MUNIR** (Mar)	(27) 01.09.95
19	Borja **MAYORAL**	(25) 05.04.97
28	John **PATRICK** (Ire)	(19) 24.10.03
30	Moi **PARRA**	(20) 24.06.02

COACH

Quique **SANCHEZ FLORES**	(57) 05.02.65

GIRONA

GOALKEEPERS

1	Juan **CARLOS**	(34) 20.01.88
13	Paulo **GAZZANIGA** (Arg)	(30) 02.01.92
26	Toni **FUIDIAS**	(21) 15.04.01
30	Lluc **MATAS**	(20) 01.01.02

DEFENDERS

2	Bernardo **ESPINOSA** (Col)	(33) 11.07.89
3	Miguel **GUTIERREZ**	(21) 27.07.01
4	Arnau **MARTINEZ**	(19) 25.04.03
5	David **LOPEZ**	(33) 09.10.89
15	**JUANPE**	(31) 30.04.91
16	Javi **HERNANDEZ**	(24) 02.05.98
20	Yan **COUTO** (Bra)	(20) 03.06.02
22	Santiago **BUENO** (Uru)	(24) 09.11.98
33	Joel **ROCA**	(17) 07.06.05

MIDFIELDERS

6	Ibrahima **KEBE** (Mli)	(22) 02.08.00
8	Ramon **TERRATS**	(22) 18.10.00
10	Samu **SAIZ**	(31) 22.01.91
11	**VALERY**	(23) 23.11.99
12	Toni **VILLA**	(27) 07.01.95
14	Aleix **GARCIA**	(25) 28.06.97
18	Oriol **ROMEU**	(31) 24.09.91
19	**REINIER** (Bra)	(20) 19.01.02
21	Yangel **HERRERA** (Ven)	(24) 07.01.98
23	Ivan **MARTIN**	(23) 14.02.99
24	Borja **GARCIA**	(32) 02.11.90
32	Oscar **URENA**	(19) 31.05.03
36	Ricard **ARTERO**	(19) 05.02.03

FORWARDS

7	Cristhian **STUANI** (Uru)	(36) 12.10.86
9	Valentin **CASTELLANOS** (Arg)	(24) 03.10.98
17	Rodrigo **RIQUELME**	(22) 02.04.00
25	Manu **VALLEJO**	(25) 14.02.97

COACH

Michel **SANCHEZ**	(47) 30.10.75

MALLORCA

GOALKEEPERS
1 Predrag **RAJKOVIC** (Srb) (27) 31.10.95
13 Dominik **GREIF** (Svk) (25) 06.04.97
31 Leo **ROMAN** (22) 06.07.00
33 Pere **GARCIA** (20) 22.03.02

DEFENDERS
2 Matija **NASTASIC** (Srb) (29) 28.03.93
3 Braian **CUFRE** (Arg) (25) 15.12.96
5 Franco **RUSSO** (Arg) (28) 25.10.94
6 Jose Manuel **COPETE** (23) 10.10.99
15 Pablo **MAFFEO** (25) 12.07.97
18 Jaume **COSTA** (34) 18.03.88
20 Giovanni **GONZALEZ** (Uru) (28) 20.09.94
21 Antonio **RAILLO** (31) 08.10.91
24 Martin **VALJENT** (Svk) (26) 11.12.95
29 Josep **GAYA** (22) 07.07.00

MIDFIELDERS
4 Inigo **RUIZ DE GALARRETA** (29) 06.08.93
8 Clement **GRENIER** (Fra) (31) 07.01.91
10 Antonio **SANCHEZ** (25) 22.04.97
12 Iddrisu **BABA** (Gha) (26) 22.01.96
14 Dani **RODRIGUEZ** (34) 06.06.88
16 Rodrigo **BATTAGLIA** (Arg) (31) 12.07.91
19 **LEE** Kang-in (Kor) (21) 19.02.01
30 Miquel **LLABRES** (22) 28.01.00

FORWARDS
7 Vedat **MURIQI** (Kos) (28) 24.04.94
9 **ABDON** (29) 07.12.92
11 Lago **JUNIOR** (Civ) (31) 31.12.90
17 Tino **KADEWERE** (Zim) (26) 05.01.96
22 **ANGEL** (35) 26.04.87
23 Amath **NDIAYE** (Sen) (26) 16.07.96
34 Javier **LLABRES** (20) 11.09.02

COACH
Javier **AGUIRRE** (Mex) (63) 01.12.58

OSASUNA

GOALKEEPERS
1 Sergio **HERRERA** (29) 05.06.93
13 Juan **PEREZ** (26) 15.07.96
25 Aitor **FERNANDEZ** (31) 03.05.91
36 **DARIO** (23) 19.10.99

DEFENDERS
2 Nacho **VIDAL** (27) 24.01.95
3 Juan **CRUZ** (30) 28.07.92
4 Unai **GARCIA** (30) 03.02.92
5 David **GARCIA** (28) 14.02.94
15 Ruben **PENA** (31) 18.07.91
20 Manu **SANCHEZ** (22) 24.08.00
23 **ARIDANE** (33) 23.03.89
31 Jorge **HERRANDO** (21) 28.02.01

MIDFIELDERS
6 Lucas **TORRO** (28) 19.07.94
7 Jon **MONCAYOLA** (24) 13.05.98
8 Darko **BRASANAC** (Srb) (30) 12.02.92
10 Roberto **TORRES** (33) 07.03.89
14 Ruben **GARCIA** (29) 14.07.93
16 Moi **GOMEZ** (28) 23.06.94
19 Pablo **IBANEZ** (24) 20.09.98
22 Aimar **OROZ** (20) 27.11.01

FORWARDS
9 Chimy **AVILA** (Arg) (28) 06.02.94
11 Kike **BARJA** (25) 01.04.97
12 Abde **EZZALZOULI** (Mar) (20) 17.12.01
17 Ante **BUDIMIR** (Cro) (31) 22.07.91
18 Kike **GARCIA** (33) 25.11.89
33 Iker **BENITO** (20) 10.08.02
37 Pau **MARTINEZ** (22) 10.11.00

COACH
Jagoba **ARRASATE** (44) 22.04.78

RAYO VALLECANO

GOALKEEPERS
1 Stole **DIMITRIEVSKI** (Mkd) (28) 25.12.93
13 Diego **LOPEZ** (41) 03.11.81
30 Miguel **MORRO** (22) 11.09.00

DEFENDERS
2 Mario **HERNANDEZ** (23) 25.01.99
3 Fran **GARCIA** (23) 14.08.99
4 Mario **SUAREZ** (35) 24.02.87
5 Alejandro **CATENA** (28) 28.10.94
15 Pep **CHAVARRIA** (24) 10.04.98
16 Abdul **MUMIN** (Gha) (24) 06.06.98
19 Florian **LEJEUNE** (Fra) (31) 20.05.91
20 Ivan **BALLIU** (Alb) (30) 01.01.92
24 Esteban **SAVELJIC** (Mkd) (31) 20.05.91
29 Diego **MENDEZ** (19) 29.08.03

MIDFIELDERS
6 Santi **COMESANA** (26) 05.10.96
8 Oscar **TREJO** (Arg) (34) 26.04.88
11 Randy **NTEKA** (Fra) (24) 06.12.97
14 **SALVI** (31) 30.03.91
17 Unai **LOPEZ** (27) 30.10.95
18 Alvaro **GARCIA** (30) 27.10.92
21 Pathe **CISS** (Sen) (28) 16.03.94
23 Oscar **VALENTIN** (28) 20.08.94
28 Pablo **MUNOZ** (19) 04.09.03

FORWARDS
7 Isi **PALAZON** (27) 27.12.94
9 Radamel **FALCAO** (Col) (36) 10.02.86
10 **BEBE** (Cpv) (32) 12.07.90
12 Andres **MARTIN** (23) 11.07.99
22 Jose **POZO** (26) 15.03.96
34 Sergio **CAMELLO** (21) 10.02.01

COACH
Andoni **IRAOLA** (40) 22.06.82

REAL BETIS

GOALKEEPERS
1 Claudio **BRAVO** (Chi) (39) 13.04.83
13 Rui **SILVA** (Por) (28) 07.02.94
25 Dani **MARTIN** (24) 08.07.98

DEFENDERS
2 Martin **MONTOYA** (31) 14.04.91
3 Edgar **GONZALEZ** (25) 01.04.97
6 Victor **RUIZ** (33) 25.01.89
15 Alex **MORENO** (29) 08.06.93
16 German **PEZZELLA** (Arg) (31) 27.06.91
19 **LUIZ FELIPE** (Ita) (25) 22.03.97
23 Youssouf **SABALY** (Sen) (29) 05.03.93
32 Fran **DELGADO** (21) 11.07.01
33 Juan **MIRANDA** (22) 19.01.00

MIDFIELDERS
4 Paul **AKOUOKOU** (Civ) (24) 20.12.97
5 Guido **RODRIGUEZ** (Arg) (28) 12.04.94
8 Nabil **FEKIR** (Fra) (29) 18.07.93
10 Sergio **CANALES** (31) 16.02.91
14 William **CARVALHO** (Por) (30) 07.04.92
18 Andres **GUARDADO** (Mex) (36) 28.09.86
22 Victor **CAMARASA** (28) 28.05.94
28 **RODRI** (22) 16.02.00
41 Jose **LARA** (22) 07.03.00

FORWARDS
7 **JUANMI** (29) 20.05.93
9 Borja **IGLESIAS** (29) 17.01.93
11 **LUIZ HENRIQUE** (Bra) (21) 02.01.01
12 **WILLIAN JOSE** (Bra) (31) 23.11.91
17 **JOAQUIN** (41) 21.07.81
21 **LOREN** (28) 30.12.93
24 Aitor **RUIBAL** (26) 22.03.96
29 Juan **CRUZ** (22) 25.04.00

COACH
Manuel **PELLEGRINI** (Chi) (69) 16.09.53

REAL MADRID

GOALKEEPERS
1 Thibaut **COURTOIS** (Bel) (30) 11.05.92
13 Andriy **LUNIN** (Ukr) (23) 11.02.99
26 Luis **LOPEZ** (21) 08.05.01

DEFENDERS
2 Dani **CARVAJAL** (30) 11.01.92
3 **EDER MILITAO** (Bra) (24) 18.01.98
4 David **ALABA** (Aut) (30) 24.06.92
5 Jesus **VALLEJO** (25) 05.01.97
6 **NACHO** (32) 18.01.90
16 Alvaro **ODRIOZOLA** (26) 14.12.95
22 Antonio **RUDIGER** (Ger) (29) 03.03.93
23 Ferland **MENDY** (Fra) (27) 08.06.95
41 Rafa **MARIN** (20) 19.05.02

MIDFIELDERS
8 Toni **KROOS** (Ger) (32) 04.01.90
10 Luka **MODRIC** (Cro) (37) 09.09.85
12 Eduardo **CAMAVINGA** (Fra) (20) 10.11.02
15 Federico **VALVERDE** (Uru) (24) 22.07.98
18 Aurelien **TCHOUAMENI** (Fra) (22) 27.01.00
19 Dani **CEBALLOS** (26) 07.08.96

FORWARDS
7 Eden **HAZARD** (Bel) (31) 07.01.91
9 Karim **BENZEMA** (Fra) (34) 19.12.87
11 Marco **ASENSIO** (26) 21.01.96
17 Lucas **VAZQUEZ** (31) 01.07.91
20 **VINICIUS JUNIOR** (Bra) (22) 12.07.00
21 **RODRYGO** (Bra) (21) 09.01.01
24 **MARIANO** (Dom) (29) 01.08.93

COACH
Carlo **ANCELOTTI** (Ita) (63) 10.06.59

REAL SOCIEDAD

GOALKEEPERS
1 Alex **REMIRO** (27) 24.03.95
13 Andoni **ZUBIAURRE** (25) 04.12.96
32 Unai **MARRERO** (21) 09.10.01
45 Egoitz **ARANA** (20) 19.02.02

DEFENDERS
2 Alex **SOLA** (23) 09.06.99
5 Igor **ZUBELDIA** (25) 30.03.97
6 Aritz **ELUSTONDO** (28) 28.03.94
12 Aihen **MUNOZ** (25) 16.08.97
15 Diego **RICO** (29) 23.02.93
18 Andoni **GOROSABEL** (26) 04.08.96
20 Jon **PACHECO** (21) 08.01.01
24 Robin **LE NORMAND** (Fra) (26) 11.11.96
26 Aritz **ARAMBARRI** (24) 31.01.98
30 Urko **GONZALEZ** (21) 20.03.01

MIDFIELDERS
3 Martin **ZUBIMENDI** (23) 02.02.99
4 **ILLARRA** (32) 08.03.90
8 Mikel **MERINO** (26) 22.06.96
16 Ander **GUEVARA** (25) 07.07.97
17 Robert **NAVARRO** (20) 12.04.02
21 David **SILVA** (36) 08.01.86
22 Benat **TURRIENTES** (20) 31.01.02
31 Jon Ander **OLASAGASTI** (22) 16.08.00
42 Pablo **MARIN** (19) 03.07.03

FORWARDS
7 Ander **BARRENETXEA** (20) 27.12.01
9 Carlos **FERNANDEZ** (26) 22.05.96
10 Mikel **OYARZABAL** (25) 21.04.97
11 Mohamed-Ali **CHO** (Fra) (18) 19.01.04
14 Takefusa **KUBO** (Jpn) (21) 04.06.01
19 Alexander **SORLOTH** (Nor) (26) 05.12.95
23 Brais **MENDEZ** (25) 07.01.97
25 Umar **SADIQ** (Nga) (25) 02.02.97
28 Ander **MARTIN** (22) 16.11.00
33 Jon **KARRIKABURU** (20) 19.09.02

COACH
Imanol **ALGUACIL** (51) 04.07.71

REAL VALLADOLID

GOALKEEPERS
1 Jordi **MASIP** (33) 03.01.89
25 Sergio **ASENJO** (33) 28.06.89
31 Alvaro **ACEVES** (19) 26.07.03

DEFENDERS
2 Luis **PEREZ** (27) 04.02.95
3 Zouhair **FEDDAL** (Mar) (32) 23.12.89
5 Javi **SANCHEZ** (25) 14.03.97
12 Lucas **OLAZA** (Uru) (28) 21.07.94
15 Jawad **EL YAMIQ** (Mar) (30) 29.02.92
18 Sergio **ESCUDERO** (33) 02.09.89
24 **JOAQUIN** (26) 31.05.96
27 Ivan **FRESNEDA** (18) 28.09.04
32 David **TORRES** (19) 05.03.03
39 Lucas **ROSA** (Bra) (22) 03.04.00

MIDFIELDERS
4 Kike **PEREZ** (25) 14.02.97
6 Alvaro **AGUADO** (26) 01.05.96
8 **MONCHU** (23) 13.09.99
10 Oscar **PLANO** (31) 11.02.91
11 Gonzalo **PLATA** (Ecu) (22) 01.11.00
14 Mickael **MALSA** (Mtq) (26) 12.10.96
17 Roque **MESA** (33) 07.06.89
19 **KENEDY** (Bra) (26) 08.02.96
23 Anuar **TUHAMI** (Mar) (27) 15.01.95

FORWARDS
7 Sergio **LEON** (33) 06.01.89
9 Shon **WEISSMAN** (Isr) (26) 14.02.96
16 Sergi **GUARDIOLA** (31) 29.05.91
20 Juanjo **NARVAEZ** (Col) (27) 12.02.95
21 Ivan **SANCHEZ** (30) 23.09.92
30 Roberto **ARROYO** (19) 25.08.03

COACH
PACHETA (54) 23.03.68

SEVILLA

GOALKEEPERS
1 Marko **DMITROVIC** (Srb) (30) 24.01.92
13 **BONO** (Mar) (31) 05.04.91
31 Alberto **FLORES** (19) 10.11.03

DEFENDERS
2 Gonzalo **MONTIEL** (Arg) (25) 01.01.97
3 **ALEX TELLES** (Bra) (29) 15.12.92
4 Karim **REKIK** (Ned) (27) 02.12.94
14 Tanguy **NIANZOU** (Fra) (20) 07.06.02
16 Jesus **NAVAS** (37) 21.11.85
19 Marcos **ACUNA** (Arg) (31) 28.10.91
23 **MARCAO** (Bra) (26) 05.06.96
26 Pablo **PEREZ** (21) 18.08.01
29 Kike **SALAS** (20) 23.04.02
30 Jose **ANGEL** (20) 29.01.02

MIDFIELDERS
6 Nemanja **GUDELJ** (Srb) (31) 16.11.91
8 Joan **JORDAN** (28) 06.07.94
10 Ivan **RAKITIC** (Cro) (34) 10.03.88
11 Adnan **JANUZAJ** (Bel) (27) 05.02.95
18 Thomas **DELANEY** (Den) (31) 03.09.91
20 **FERNANDO** (Bra) (35) 25.07.87
21 Oliver **TORRES** (28) 10.11.94
22 **ISCO** (30) 21.04.92
24 Papu **GOMEZ** (Arg) (34) 15.02.88
34 Pedro **ORTIZ** (22) 19.08.00
43 Nacho **QUINTANA** (21) 23.02.01

FORWARDS
5 Kasper **DOLBERG** (Den) (25) 06.10.97
7 **SUSO** (29) 19.11.93
9 Jesus **CORONA** (Mex) (29) 06.01.93
12 Rafa **MIR** (25) 18.06.97
15 Youssef **EN-NESYRI** (Mar) (25) 01.06.97
17 Erik **LAMELA** (Arg) (30) 04.03.92

COACH
Jorge **SAMPAOLI** (Arg) (62) 13.03.60

VALENCIA

GOALKEEPERS
1 Iago **HERRERIN** (34) 25.01.88
13 Cristian **RIVERO** (24) 21.03.98
25 Giorgi **MAMARDASHVILI** (Geo) (22) 29.09.00

DEFENDERS
2 Thierry **CORREIA** (Por) (23) 09.03.99
3 Toni **LATO** (25) 21.11.97
5 **GABRIEL PAULISTA** (Bra) (31) 26.11.90
12 Mouctar **DIAKHABY** (Fra) (25) 19.12.96
14 Jose **GAYA** (27) 25.05.95
15 Cenk **OZKACAR** (Tur) (22) 06.10.00
20 Dimitri **FOULQUIER** (Glp) (29) 23.03.93
21 Jesus **VAZQUEZ** (19) 02.01.03
24 Eray **COMERT** (Sui) (24) 04.02.98
33 Cristhian **MOSQUERA** (18) 27.06.04
34 **JOSEDA** (20) 01.05.02
38 Cesar **TARREGA** (20) 26.02.02
39 Ruben **IRANZO** (19) 14.03.03

MIDFIELDERS
4 Yunus **MUSAH** (USA) (19) 29.11.02
6 Hugo **GUILLAMON** (22) 31.01.00
8 Ilaix **MORIBA** (Gui) (19) 19.01.03
17 **NICO** (20) 03.01.02
18 Andre **ALMEIDA** (Por) (22) 30.05.00
35 **YELLU** (18) 25.05.04
41 Tiago **RIBEIRO** (Por) (20) 14.03.02
46 Mario **DOMINGUEZ** (18) 10.02.04

FORWARDS
7 Edinson **CAVANI** (Uru) (35) 14.02.87
9 Justin **KLUIVERT** (Ned) (23) 05.05.99
11 Samu **CASTILLEJO** (27) 18.01.95
16 Samuel **LINO** (Bra) (22) 23.12.99
19 Hugo **DURO** (23) 10.11.99
22 **MARCOS ANDRE** (Bra) (26) 20.10.96
29 Fran **PEREZ** (20) 09.09.02
31 Hugo **GONZALEZ** (19) 07.02.03
40 Diego **LOPEZ** (20) 13.05.02

COACH
Gennaro **GATTUSO** (Ita) (44) 09.01.78

VILLARREAL

GOALKEEPERS
1 Pepe **REINA** (40) 31.08.82
13 Geronimo **RULLI** (Arg) (30) 20.05.92
31 Iker **ALVAREZ** (And) (21) 25.07.01
35 Filip **JORGENSEN** (Den) (20) 16.04.02

DEFENDERS
2 Kiko **FEMENIA** (31) 02.02.91
3 Raul **ALBIOL** (37) 04.09.85
4 Pau **TORRES** (25) 16.01.97
5 Jorge **CUENCA** (23) 17.11.99
8 Juan **FOYTH** (Arg) (24) 12.01.98
12 Johan **MOJICA** (Col) (30) 21.08.92
18 Alberto **MORENO** (30) 05.07.92
23 Aissa **MANDI** (Alg) (31) 22.10.91
24 Alfonso **PEDRAZA** (26) 09.04.96
36 Dani **TASENDE** (22) 06.07.00
37 Adrian **DE LA FUENTE** (23) 26.02.99

MIDFIELDERS
6 Etienne **CAPOUE** (Fra) (34) 11.07.88
10 Dani **PAREJO** (33) 16.04.89
14 Manu **TRIGUEROS** (31) 17.10.91
17 Giovani **LO CELSO** (Arg) (26) 09.04.96
19 Francis **COQUELIN** (Fra) (31) 13.05.91
20 Manu **MORLANES** (23) 12.01.99
28 Carlo **GARCIA** (21) 12.02.01
32 Antonio **PACHECO** (20) 03.01.02
40 Rodrigo **ALONSO** (19) 04.01.03

FORWARDS
7 Gerard **MORENO** (30) 07.04.92
9 Arnaut **DANJUMA** (Ned) (25) 31.01.97
11 Samuel **CHUKWUEZE** (Nga) (23) 22.05.99
15 Nicolas **JACKSON** (Sen) (21) 20.06.01
16 Alex **BAENA** (21) 20.07.01
21 **YEREMY** (20) 20.10.02
22 Jose **MORALES** (35) 23.07.87
34 Fer **NINO** (22) 24.10.00

COACH
Quique **SETIEN** (64) 27.09.58

(Ages as of 25.11.22)

SERIE A 2022-23

ATALANTA

GOALKEEPERS

1 Juan **MUSSO** (Arg) (28) 06.05.94
31 Francesco **ROSSI** (31) 27.04.91
47 Tommaso **BERTINI** (18) 13.01.04
57 Marco **SPORTIELLO** (30) 10.05.92

DEFENDERS

2 Rafael **TOLOI** (32) 10.10.90
3 Joakim **MAEHLE** (Den) (25) 20.05.97
5 Caleb **OKOLI** (21) 13.07.01
6 Jose **PALOMINO** (Arg) (32) 05.01.90
19 Berat **DJIMSITI** (Alb) (29) 19.02.93
22 Matteo **RUGGERI** (20) 11.07.02
28 Merih **DEMIRAL** (Tur) (24) 05.03.98
33 Hans **HATEBOER** (Ned) (28) 09.01.94
42 Giorgio **SCALVINI** (18) 11.12.03
77 Davide **ZAPPACOSTA** (30) 11.06.92
93 Brandon **SOPPY** (Fra) (20) 21.02.02

MIDFIELDERS

7 Teun **KOOPMEINERS** (Ned) (24) 28.02.98
13 **EDERSON** (Bra) (23) 07.07.99
15 Marten **DE ROON** (Ned) (31) 29.03.91
18 Ruslan **MALINOVSKIY** (Ukr) (29) 04.05.93
21 Nadir **ZORTEA** (23) 19.06.99
88 Mario **PASALIC** (Cro) (27) 09.02.95

FORWARDS

9 Luis **MURIEL** (Col) (31) 16.04.91
10 Jeremie **BOGA** (Civ) (25) 03.01.97
11 Ademola **LOOKMAN** (Nga) (25) 20.10.97
17 Rasmus **HOJLUND** (Den) (19) 04.02.03
91 Duvan **ZAPATA** (Col) (31) 01.04.91

COACH

Gian Piero **GASPERINI** (64) 26.01.58

BOLOGNA

GOALKEEPERS

1 Francesco **BARDI** (30) 18.01.92
12 Francesco **RAFFAELLI** (17) 21.05.05
23 Nicola **BAGNOLINI** (18) 14.03.04
28 Lukasz **SKORUPSKI** (Pol) (31) 05.05.91

DEFENDERS

3 Stefan **POSCH** (Aut) (25) 14.05.97
4 Joaquin **SOSA** (Uru) (20) 10.01.02
5 Adama **SOUMAORO** (Fra) (30) 18.06.92
14 Kevin **BONIFAZI** (26) 19.05.96
17 Gary **MEDEL** (Chi) (35) 03.08.87
22 Charalampos **LYKOGIANNIS** (Gre) (29) 22.10.93
24 Riccardo **STIVANELLO** (18) 24.04.04
26 Jhon **LUCUMI** (Col) (24) 26.06.98
29 Lorenzo **DE SILVESTRI** (34) 23.05.88
33 Denso **KASIUS** (Ned) (20) 06.10.02
39 Mattia **MOTOLESE** (18) 13.04.04
50 Andrea **CAMBIASO** (22) 20.02.00
66 Wisdom **AMEY** (17) 11.08.05

MIDFIELDERS

6 Nikola **MORO** (Cro) (24) 12.03.98
8 Nicolas **DOMINGUEZ** (Arg) (24) 28.06.98
19 Lewis **FERGUSON** (Sco) (23) 24.08.99
20 Michel **AEBISCHER** (Sui) (25) 06.01.97
21 Roberto **SORIANO** (31) 08.02.91
30 Jerdy **SCHOUTEN** (Ned) (25) 12.01.97
33 Niklas **PYYHTIA** (Fin) (19) 25.09.03
82 Kacper **URBANSKI** (Pol) (18) 07.09.04

FORWARDS

7 Riccardo **ORSOLINI** (25) 24.01.97
9 Marko **ARNAUTOVIC** (Aut) (33) 19.04.89
10 Nicola **SANSONE** (31) 10.09.91
11 Joshua **ZIRKZEE** (Ned) (21) 22.05.01
18 Antonio **RAIMONDO** (18) 18.03.04
55 Emanuel **VIGNATO** (22) 24.08.00
99 Musa **BARROW** (Gam) (24) 14.11.98

COACH

Thiago **MOTTA** (40) 28.08.82

CREMONESE

GOALKEEPERS

12 Marco **CARNESECCHI** (22) 01.07.00
13 Gianluca **SARO** (22) 25.06.00
22 Dorian **CIEZKOWSKI** (Pol) (21) 22.03.01
45 Mouhamadou **SARR** (Sen) (25) 05.01.97
97 Ionut **RADU** (Rom) (25) 28.05.97

DEFENDERS

2 Jack **HENDRY** (Sco) (27) 07.05.95
3 Emanuele **VALERI** (23) 07.12.98
4 Emanuel **AIWU** (Aut) (21) 25.12.00
5 Johan **VASQUEZ** (Mex) (24) 22.10.98
15 Matteo **BIANCHETTI** (29) 17.03.93
17 Leonardo **SERNICOLA** (25) 30.07.97
21 Vlad **CHIRICHES** (Rom) (33) 14.11.89
33 Giacomo **QUAGLIATA** (22) 19.02.00
44 Luka **LOCHOSHVILI** (Geo) (24) 29.05.98
60 Maissa **NDIAYE** (Sen) (20) 28.01.02

MIDFIELDERS

6 Charles **PICKEL** (Sui) (25) 15.05.97
8 Santiago **ASCACIBAR** (Arg) (25) 25.02.97
18 Paolo **GHIGLIONE** (25) 02.02.97
19 Michele **CASTAGNETTI** (32) 27.12.89
23 Christian **ACELLA** (20) 07.07.02
28 Soualiho **MEITE** (Fra) (28) 17.03.94
32 Gonzalo **ESCALANTE** (Arg) (29) 27.03.93
62 Tommaso **MILANESE** (20) 31.07.02

FORWARDS

7 Jaime **BAEZ** (Uru) (27) 25.04.95
9 Daniel **CIOFANI** (37) 31.07.85
10 Cristian **BUONAIUTO** (29) 29.12.92
20 Felix **AFENA-GYAN** (Gha) (19) 19.01.03
74 Frank **TSADJOUT** (23) 28.07.99
77 David **OKEREKE** (Nga) (25) 29.08.97
90 Cyriel **DESSERS** (Nga) (27) 08.12.94
98 Luca **ZANIMACCHIA** (24) 19.07.98

COACH

Massimiliano **ALVINI** (52) 20.04.70

EMPOLI

GOALKEEPERS

1 Samuele **PERISAN** (25) 21.08.97
13 Guglielmo **VICARIO** (26) 07.10.96
22 Samir **UJKANI** (Kos) (34) 05.07.88
31 Gian Marco **FANTONI** (18) 01.01.04
37 Jacopo **SEGHETTI** (17) 17.02.05

DEFENDERS

3 Liberato **CACACE** (Nzl) (22) 27.09.00
4 Sebastian **WALUKIEWICZ** (Pol) (22) 05.04.00
6 Koni **DE WINTER** (Bel) (20) 12.06.02
24 Tyronne **EBUEHI** (Nga) (26) 16.12.95
26 Lorenzo **TONELLI** (32) 17.01.90
30 Petar **STOJANOVIC** (Svn) (27) 07.10.95
33 Sebastiano **LUPERTO** (26) 06.09.96
34 Ardian **ISMAJLI** (Alb) (26) 30.09.96
36 Gabriele **GUARINO** (18) 14.04.04
38 Gabriele **INDRAGOLI** (18) 20.02.04
65 Fabiano **PARISI** (22) 09.11.00

MIDFIELDERS

5 Alberto **GRASSI** (27) 07.03.95
8 Liam **HENDERSON** (Sco) (26) 25.04.96
10 Nedim **BAJRAMI** (Alb) (23) 28.02.99
11 Jean-Daniel **AKPA-AKPRO** (Civ) (30) 11.10.92
18 Razvan **MARIN** (Rom) (26) 23.05.96
20 Duccio **DEGL'INNOCENTI** (19) 28.04.03
21 Jacopo **FAZZINI** (19) 16.03.03
25 Filippo **BANDINELLI** (27) 29.03.95
32 Nicolas **HAAS** (Sui) (26) 23.01.96
35 Tommaso **BALDANZI** (19) 23.03.03

FORWARDS

7 Sam **LAMMERS** (Ned) (25) 30.04.97
9 Martin **SATRIANO** (Uru) (21) 20.02.01
14 Marko **PJACA** (Cro) (27) 06.05.95
17 Emmanuel **EKONG** (Swe) (20) 25.06.02
23 Mattia **DESTRO** (31) 20.03.91
28 Nicolo **CAMBIAGHI** (21) 28.12.00

COACH

Paolo **ZANETTI** (39) 16.12.82

FIORENTINA

GOALKEEPERS

1 Pietro **TERRACCIANO** (32) 08.03.90
31 Michele **CEROFOLINI** (23) 04.01.99
95 Pierluigi **GOLLINI** (27) 18.03.95

DEFENDERS

2 **DODO** (Bra) (24) 17.11.98
3 Cristiano **BIRAGHI** (30) 01.09.92
4 Nikola **MILENKOVIC** (Srb) (25) 12.10.97
15 Aleksa **TERZIC** (Srb) (23) 17.08.99
16 Luca **RANIERI** (23) 23.04.99
23 Lorenzo **VENUTI** (27) 12.04.95
28 Lucas **MARTINEZ QUARTA** (Arg) (26) 10.05.96
98 **IGOR** (Bra) (24) 07.02.98

MIDFIELDERS

5 Giacomo **BONAVENTURA** (33) 22.08.89
8 Riccardo **SAPONARA** (30) 21.12.91
10 Gaetano **CASTROVILLI** (25) 17.02.97
14 Youssef **MALEH** (Mar) (24) 22.08.98
24 Marco **BENASSI** (28) 08.09.94
27 Szymon **ZURKOWSKI** (Pol) (25) 25.09.97
32 Alfred **DUNCAN** (Gha) (29) 10.03.93
34 Sofyan **AMRABAT** (Mar) (26) 21.08.96
38 Rolando **MANDRAGORA** (25) 29.06.97
40 Costantino **FAVASULI** (18) 26.04.04
42 Alessandro **BIANCO** (20) 01.10.02
44 Dimo **KRASTEV** (Bul) (19) 10.02.03
72 Antonin **BARAK** (Cze) (27) 03.12.94

FORWARDS

7 Luka **JOVIC** (Srb) (24) 23.12.97
9 Arthur **CABRAL** (Bra) (24) 25.04.98
11 Jonathan **IKONE** (Fra) (24) 02.05.98
22 Nicolas **GONZALEZ** (Arg) (24) 06.04.98
29 Eljon **TOCI** (Alb) (19) 09.01.03
33 Riccardo **SOTTIL** (23) 03.06.99
99 Christian **KOUAME** (Civ) (24) 06.12.97

COACH

Vincenzo **ITALIANO** (44) 10.12.77

INTERNAZIONALE

GOALKEEPERS

1 Samir **HANDANOVIC** (Svn) (38) 14.07.84
21 Alex **CORDAZ** (39) 01.01.83
24 Andre **ONANA** (Cmr) (26) 02.04.96
40 Nikolaos **BOTIS** (Gre) (18) 31.03.04

DEFENDERS

2 Denzel **DUMFRIES** (Ned) (26) 18.04.96
6 Stefan **DE VRIJ** (Ned) (30) 05.02.92
8 Robin **GOSENS** (Ger) (28) 05.07.94
12 Raoul **BELLANOVA** (22) 17.05.00
15 Francesco **ACERBI** (34) 10.02.88
32 Federico **DIMARCO** (25) 10.11.97
33 Danilo **D'AMBROSIO** (34) 09.09.88
36 Matteo **DARMIAN** (32) 02.12.89
37 Milan **SKRINIAR** (Svk) (27) 11.02.95
46 Mattia **ZANOTTI** (19) 11.01.03
47 Alessandro **FONTANAROSA** (19) 07.02.03
95 Alessandro **BASTONI** (23) 13.04.99

MIDFIELDERS

5 Roberto **GAGLIARDINI** (28) 07.04.94
14 Kristjan **ASLLANI** (Alb) (20) 09.03.02
20 Hakan **CALHANOGLU** (Tur) (28) 08.02.94
22 Henrikh **MKHITARYAN** (Arm) (33) 21.01.89
23 Nicolo **BARELLA** (25) 07.02.97
45 Valentin **CARBONI** (17) 05.03.05
50 Aleksandar **STANKOVIC** (Srb) (17) 03.08.05
77 Marcelo **BROZOVIC** (Cro) (30) 16.11.92

FORWARDS

9 Edin **DZEKO** (Bih) (36) 17.03.86
10 Lautaro **MARTINEZ** (Arg) (25) 22.08.97
11 Joaquin **CORREA** (Arg) (28) 13.08.94
42 Dennis **CURATOLO** (18) 03.04.04
90 Romelu **LUKAKU** (Bel) (29) 13.05.93

COACH

Simone **INZAGHI** (46) 05.04.76

JUVENTUS

GOALKEEPERS

1 Wojciech **SZCZESNY** (Pol) (32) 18.04.90
23 Carlo **PINSOGLIO** (32) 16.03.90
36 Mattia **PERIN** (30) 10.11.92
41 Giovanni **GAROFANI** (20) 20.10.02

DEFENDERS

2 Mattia **DE SCIGLIO** (30) 20.10.92
3 **BREMER** (Bra) (25) 18.03.97
6 **DANILO** (Bra) (31) 15.07.91
11 Juan **CUADRADO** (Col) (34) 26.05.88
12 **ALEX SANDRO** (Bra) (31) 26.01.91
15 Federico **GATTI** (24) 24.06.98
19 Leonardo **BONUCCI** (35) 01.05.87
24 Daniele **RUGANI** (28) 29.07.94
42 Tommaso **BARBIERI** (20) 26.08.02

MIDFIELDERS

5 Manuel **LOCATELLI** (24) 08.01.98
8 Weston **McKENNIE** (USA) (24) 28.08.98
10 Paul **POGBA** (Fra) (29) 15.03.93
17 Filip **KOSTIC** (Srb) (30) 01.11.92
20 Fabio **MIRETTI** (19) 03.08.03
25 Adrien **RABIOT** (Fra) (27) 03.04.95
32 Leandro **PAREDES** (Arg) (28) 29.06.94
43 Samuel **ILING-JUNIOR** (Eng) (19) 04.10.03
44 Nicolo **FAGIOLI** (21) 12.02.01
45 Enzo **BARRENECHEA** (Arg) (21) 22.05.01

FORWARDS

7 Federico **CHIESA** (25) 25.10.97
9 Dusan **VLAHOVIC** (Srb) (22) 28.01.00
14 Arkadiusz **MILIK** (Pol) (28) 28.02.94
18 Moise **KEAN** (22) 28.02.00
21 **KAIO JORGE** (Bra) (20) 24.01.02
22 Angel **DI MARIA** (Arg) (34) 14.02.88
30 Matias **SOULE** (Arg) (19) 15.04.03
33 Marley **AKE** (Fra) (21) 05.01.01
40 Marco **DA GRACA** (20) 01.05.02

COACH

Massimiliano **ALLEGRI** (55) 11.08.67

LAZIO

GOALKEEPERS

1 Luis **MAXIMIANO** (Por) (23) 05.01.99
31 Marius **ADAMONIS** (Ltu) (25) 13.05.97
61 Federico **MAGRO** (17) 10.01.05
94 Ivan **PROVEDEL** (28) 17.03.94

DEFENDERS

4 **PATRIC** (Spa) (29) 17.04.93
13 Alessio **ROMAGNOLI** (27) 12.01.95
15 Nicolo **CASALE** (24) 14.02.98
16 Dimitrije **KAMENOVIC** (Srb) (22) 16.07.00
23 Elseid **HYSAJ** (Alb) (28) 02.02.94
26 Stefan **RADU** (Rom) (36) 22.10.86
34 Mario **GILA** (Spa) (22) 29.08.00
44 Romano **FLORIANI** (19) 27.01.03
77 Adam **MARUSIC** (Mne) (30) 17.10.92
83 Enzo **ADEAGBO** (Sui) (20) 11.01.02

MIDFIELDERS

5 Matias **VECINO** (Uru) (31) 24.08.91
6 **MARCOS ANTONIO** (Bra) (22) 13.06.00
10 **LUIS ALBERTO** (Spa) (29) 28.11.92
18 Luka **ROMERO** (Arg) (18) 18.11.04
20 Mattia **ZACCAGNI** (27) 16.06.95
21 Sergej **MILINKOVIC-SAVIC** (Srb) (27) 27.02.95
29 Manuel **LAZZARI** (28) 29.11.93
32 Danilo **CATALDI** (28) 06.08.94
50 Marco **BERTINI** (20) 07.08.02
88 Toma **BASIC** (Cro) (26) 25.11.96
93 Mohamed **FARES** (Alg) (26) 15.02.96

FORWARDS

7 **FELIPE ANDERSON** (Bra) (29) 15.04.93
9 **PEDRO** (Spa) (35) 28.07.87
11 Matteo **CANCELLIERI** (20) 12.02.02
17 Ciro **IMMOBILE** (32) 20.02.90

COACH

Maurizio **SARRI** (63) 10.01.59

LECCE

GOALKEEPERS

1 Marco **BLEVE** (27) 18.10.95
12 Alexandru **BORBEI** (Rom) (19) 27.06.03
21 Federico **BRANCOLINI** (21) 14.07.01
30 Wladimiro **FALCONE** (27) 12.04.95
36 Jasper **SAMOOJA** (Fin) (19) 21.07.03

DEFENDERS

3 Kastriot **DERMAKU** (Alb) (30) 15.01.92
4 Mert **CETIN** (Tur) (25) 01.01.97
5 Marin **PONGRACIC** (Cro) (25) 11.09.97
6 Federico **BASCHIROTTO** (26) 20.09.96
13 Alessandro **TUIA** (32) 08.06.90
17 Valentin **GENDREY** (Fra) (22) 21.06.00
20 Daniel **SAMEK** (Cze) (18) 19.02.04
25 Antonino **GALLO** (22) 05.01.00
26 Mattia **CIUCCI** (20) 11.11.02
70 Rob **NIZET** (Bel) (20) 14.04.02
83 Mats **LEMMENS** (Bel) (20) 10.03.02
93 Samuel **UMTITI** (Fra) (29) 14.11.93
97 Giuseppe **PEZZELLA** (24) 29.11.97

MIDFIELDERS

7 Kristoffer **ASKILDSEN** (Nor) (21) 09.01.01
8 Kristijan **BISTROVIC** (Cro) (24) 09.04.98
14 Thorir Johann **HELGASON** (Isl) (22) 28.09.00
16 Joan **GONZALEZ** (Spa) (20) 01.02.02
23 John **BJORKENGREN** (Swe) (23) 09.12.98
29 Alexis **BLIN** (Fra) (26) 16.09.96
42 Morten **HJULMAND** (Den) (23) 25.06.99
80 Medon **BERISHA** (Kos) (19) 21.10.03

FORWARDS

9 Lorenzo **COLOMBO** (20) 08.03.02
11 Federico **DI FRANCESCO** (28) 14.06.94
19 Marcin **LISTKOWSKI** (Pol) (24) 10.02.98
22 Lameck **BANDA** (Zam) (21) 29.01.01
27 **GABRIEL STREFEZZA** (Bra) (25) 18.04.97
28 Remi **OUDIN** (Fra) (26) 18.11.96
31 Joel Voelkerling **PERSSON** (Swe) (19) 15.01.03
34 Eetu **MOMMO** (Fin) (20) 04.05.02
77 Assan **CEESAY** (Gam) (28) 17.03.94
99 Pablo **RODRIGUEZ** (Spa) (21) 04.08.01

COACH

Marco **BARONI** (59) 11.09.63

MILAN

GOALKEEPERS

1 Ciprian **TATARUSANU** (Rom) (36) 09.02.86
16 Mike **MAIGNAN** (Fra) (27) 03.07.95
83 Antonio **MIRANTE** (39) 08.07.83
92 Lapo **NAVA** (18) 22.01.04
96 Andreas **JUNGDAL** (Den) (20) 22.02.02

DEFENDERS

2 Davide **CALABRIA** (25) 06.12.96
5 Fode **BALLO-TOURE** (Sen) (25) 03.01.97
19 Theo **HERNANDEZ** (Fra) (25) 06.10.97
20 Pierre **KALULU** (Fra) (22) 05.06.00
21 Sergino **DEST** (USA) (22) 03.11.00
23 Fikayo **TOMORI** (Eng) (24) 19.12.97
24 Simon **KJAER** (Den) (33) 26.03.89
25 Alessandro **FLORENZI** (31) 11.03.91
28 Malick **THIAW** (Ger) (21) 08.08.01
46 Matteo **GABBIA** (23) 21.10.99
93 Andrei **COUBIS** (Rom) (19) 29.09.03

MIDFIELDERS

4 Ismael **BENNACER** (Alg) (24) 01.12.97
7 Yacine **ADLI** (Fra) (22) 29.07.00
8 Sandro **TONALI** (22) 08.05.00
10 **BRAHIM DIAZ** (Spa) (23) 03.08.99
14 Tiemoue **BAKAYOKO** (Fra) (28) 17.08.94
32 Tommaso **POBEGA** (23) 15.07.99
33 Rade **KRUNIC** (Bih) (29) 07.10.93
40 Aster **VRANCKX** (Bel) (20) 04.10.02
88 Antonio **GALA** (18) 07.06.04
90 Charles **DE KETELAERE** (Bel) (21) 10.03.01

FORWARDS

9 Olivier **GIROUD** (Fra) (36) 30.09.86
11 Zlatan **IBRAHIMOVIC** (Swe) (41) 03.10.81
12 Ante **REBIC** (Cro) (29) 21.09.93
17 Rafael **LEAO** (Por) (23) 10.06.99
22 Marko **LAZETIC** (Srb) (18) 22.01.04
27 Divock **ORIGI** (Bel) (27) 18.04.95
30 Junior **MESSIAS** (Bra) (31) 13.05.91
56 Alexis **SAELEMAEKERS** (Bel) (23) 27.06.99

COACH

Stefano **PIOLI** (57) 19.10.65

MONZA

GOALKEEPERS

16	Michele **DI GREGORIO**	(25) 27.07.97
89	Alessio **CRAGNO**	(28) 28.06.94
91	Alessandro **SORRENTINO**	(20) 03.04.02

DEFENDERS

2	Giulio **DONATI**	(32) 05.02.90
3	Pablo **MARI** (Spa)	(29) 31.08.93
4	**MARLON** (Bra)	(27) 07.09.95
5	Luca **CALDIROLA**	(31) 01.02.91
19	Samuele **BIRINDELLI**	(23) 19.07.99
25	Gabriele **FERRARINI**	(22) 09.04.00
26	Valentin **ANTOV** (Bul)	(22) 09.11.00
30	Carlos **AUGUSTO** (Bra)	(23) 07.01.99
34	Luca **MARRONE**	(32) 28.03.90
44	Andrea **CARBONI**	(21) 04.02.01
55	Armando **IZZO**	(30) 02.03.92

MIDFIELDERS

6	Nicolo **ROVELLA**	(20) 04.12.01
7	**PEPIN** (Eqg)	(26) 14.08.96
8	Andrea **BARBERIS**	(28) 11.12.93
10	Mattia **VALOTI**	(29) 06.09.93
12	Stefano **SENSI**	(27) 05.08.95
20	Antonis **SIATOUNIS** (Gre)	(20) 26.08.02
22	Filippo **RANOCCHIA**	(21) 14.05.01
28	Andrea **COLPANI**	(23) 11.05.99
32	Matteo **PESSINA**	(25) 21.04.97
38	Warren **BONDO** (Fra)	(19) 15.09.03
69	Nicola **RIGONI**	(32) 12.11.90
79	Salvatore **MOLINA**	(30) 01.01.92
80	Samuele **VIGNATO**	(18) 24.02.04

FORWARDS

9	Christian **GYTKJAER** (Den)	(32) 06.05.90
17	Gianluca **CAPRARI**	(29) 30.07.93
24	Mirko **MARIC** (Bih)	(27) 16.05.95
37	Andrea **PETAGNA**	(27) 30.06.95
47	Dany **MOTA** (Por)	(24) 02.05.98
77	Marco **D'ALESSANDRO**	(31) 17.02.91
84	Patrick **CIURRIA**	(27) 09.02.95

COACH

Raffaele **PALLADINO**	(38) 17.04.84

NAPOLI

GOALKEEPERS

1	Alex **MERET**	(25) 22.03.97
12	Davide **MARFELLA**	(23) 15.09.99
16	Hubert **IDASIAK** (Pol)	(20) 03.02.02
30	Salvatore **SIRIGU**	(35) 12.01.87

DEFENDERS

3	**KIM** Min-jae (Kor)	(26) 15.11.96
5	**JUAN JESUS** (Bra)	(31) 10.06.91
6	Mario **RUI** (Por)	(31) 27.05.91
13	Amir **RRAHMANI** (Kos)	(28) 24.02.94
17	Mathias **OLIVERA** (Uru)	(25) 31.10.97
22	Giovanni **DI LORENZO**	(29) 04.08.93
55	Leo **OSTIGARD** (Nor)	(22) 28.11.99
59	Alessandro **ZANOLI**	(22) 03.10.00

MIDFIELDERS

4	Diego **DEMME** (Ger)	(31) 21.11.91
7	Eljif **ELMAS** (Mkd)	(23) 24.09.99
20	Piotr **ZIELINSKI** (Pol)	(28) 20.05.94
31	Karim **ZEDADKA** (Fra)	(22) 09.06.00
68	Stanislav **LOBOTKA** (Svk)	(28) 25.11.94
70	Gianluca **GAETANO**	(22) 05.05.00
91	Tanguy **NDOMBELE** (Fra)	(25) 28.12.96
99	A-Frank **ZAMBO ANGUISSA** (Cmr)	(27) 16.11.95

FORWARDS

9	Victor **OSIMHEN** (Nga)	(23) 29.12.98
11	Hirving **LOZANO** (Mex)	(27) 30.07.95
18	Giovanni **SIMEONE** (Arg)	(27) 05.07.95
21	Matteo **POLITANO**	(29) 03.08.93
23	Alessio **ZERBIN**	(23) 03.03.99
77	Khvicha **KVARATSKHELIA** (Geo)	(21) 12.02.01
81	Giacomo **RASPADORI**	(22) 18.02.00

COACH

Luciano **SPALLETTI**	(63) 07.03.59

ROMA

GOALKEEPERS

1	Rui **PATRICIO** (Por)	(34) 15.02.88
63	Pietro **BOER**	(20) 12.05.02
99	Mile **SVILAR** (Srb)	(23) 27.08.99

DEFENDERS

2	Rick **KARSDORP** (Ned)	(27) 11.02.95
3	Roger **IBANEZ** (Bra)	(24) 23.11.98
6	Chris **SMALLING** (Eng)	(33) 22.11.89
17	Matias **VINA** (Uru)	(25) 09.11.97
19	Zeki **CELIK** (Tur)	(25) 17.02.97
23	Gianluca **MANCINI**	(26) 17.04.96
24	Marash **KUMBULLA** (Alb)	(22) 08.02.00
37	Leonardo **SPINAZZOLA**	(29) 25.03.93
58	Filippo **MISSORI**	(18) 24.03.04
60	Dimitrios **KERAMITSIS** (Gre)	(18) 01.07.04
74	Jan **OLIVERAS** (Spa)	(18) 07.07.04

MIDFIELDERS

4	Bryan **CRISTANTE**	(27) 03.03.95
7	Lorenzo **PELLEGRINI**	(26) 19.06.96
8	Nemanja **MATIC** (Srb)	(34) 01.08.88
20	Mady **CAMARA** (Gui)	(25) 28.02.97
25	Georginio **WIJNALDUM** (Ned)	(32) 11.11.90
52	Edoardo **BOVE**	(20) 16.05.02
55	Ebrima **DARBOE** (Gam)	(21) 06.06.01
59	Nicola **ZALEWSKI** (Pol)	(20) 23.01.02
62	Cristian **VOLPATO**	(19) 15.11.03
65	Filippo **TRIPI**	(20) 06.01.02
73	Giacomo **FATICANTI**	(18) 31.07.04

FORWARDS

9	Tammy **ABRAHAM** (Eng)	(25) 02.10.97
11	Andrea **BELOTTI**	(28) 20.12.93
14	Eldor **SHOMURODOV** (Uzb)	(27) 29.06.95
21	Paulo **DYBALA** (Arg)	(29) 15.11.93
22	Nicolo **ZANIOLO**	(23) 02.07.99
70	Claudio **CASSANO**	(19) 22.07.03
92	Stephan **EL SHAARAWY**	(30) 27.10.92

COACH

Jose **MOURINHO** (Por)	(59) 26.01.63

SALERNITANA

GOALKEEPERS

1	Vincenzo **FIORILLO**	(32) 13.01.90
12	Alessandro **MICAI**	(29) 24.07.93
33	Luigi **SEPE**	(31) 08.05.91
71	Jacopo **DE MATTEIS**	(19) 28.12.02
72	Andrea **SORRENTINO**	(18) 21.10.04

DEFENDERS

2	Dylan **BRONN** (Tun)	(27) 19.06.95
3	Domagoj **BRADARIC** (Cro)	(22) 10.12.99
5	Flavius **DANILIUC** (Aut)	(21) 27.04.01
6	Junior **SAMBIA** (Fra)	(26) 07.09.96
17	Federico **FAZIO** (Arg)	(35) 17.03.87
23	Norbert **GYOMBER** (Svk)	(30) 03.07.92
26	Sanasi **SY** (Fra)	(23) 04.04.99
30	Pasquale **MAZZOCCHI**	(27) 27.07.95
66	Matteo **LOVATO**	(22) 14.02.00
98	Lorenzo **PIROLA**	(20) 20.02.02

MIDFIELDERS

8	Emil **BOHINEN** (Nor)	(23) 12.03.99
10	Tonny **VILHENA** (Ned)	(27) 03.01.95
16	Ivan **RADOVANOVIC** (Srb)	(34) 29.08.88
18	Lassana **COULIBALY** (Mli)	(26) 10.04.96
20	Grigoris **KASTANOS** (Cyp)	(24) 30.01.98
25	Giulio **MAGGIORE**	(24) 12.03.98
28	Leonardo **CAPEZZI**	(27) 28.03.95
35	Andrei **MOTOC** (Mda)	(20) 13.04.02
39	Antonio **IERVOLINO**	(19) 23.05.03
87	Antonio **CANDREVA**	(35) 28.02.87

FORWARDS

9	Federico **BONAZZOLI**	(25) 21.05.97
11	Erik **BOTHEIM** (Nor)	(22) 10.01.00
14	Diego **VALENCIA** (Chi)	(22) 14.01.00
19	Julian **KRISTOFFERSEN** (Nor)	(25) 10.05.97
29	Boulaye **DIA** (Sen)	(26) 16.11.96
99	Krzysztof **PIATEK** (Pol)	(27) 01.07.95

COACH

Davide **NICOLA**	(49) 05.03.73

SAMPDORIA

GOALKEEPERS

1	Emil **AUDERO**	(25) 18.01.97
22	Nikita **CONTINI**	(26) 21.05.96
30	Nicola **RAVAGLIA**	(33) 12.12.88
32	Elia **TANTALOCCHI**	(18) 30.06.04

DEFENDERS

2	Bruno **AMIONE** (Arg)	(20) 03.01.02
3	Tommaso **AUGELLO**	(28) 30.08.94
13	Andrea **CONTI**	(28) 02.03.94
15	Omar **COLLEY** (Gam)	(30) 24.10.92
21	Jeison **MURILLO** (Col)	(30) 27.05.92
24	Bartosz **BERESZYNSKI** (Pol)	(30) 12.07.92
25	Alex **FERRARI**	(28) 01.07.94
29	Nicola **MURRU**	(27) 16.12.94

MIDFIELDERS

4	Gonzalo **VILLAR** (Spa)	(24) 23.03.98
5	Valerio **VERRE**	(28) 11.01.94
7	Filip **DJURICIC** (Srb)	(30) 30.01.92
8	Tomas **RINCON** (Ven)	(34) 13.01.88
11	Abdelhamid **SABIRI** (Mar)	(25) 28.11.96
14	Ronaldo **VIEIRA** (Eng)	(24) 19.07.98
19	Telasco **SEGOVIA** (Ven)	(19) 02.04.03
20	Harry **WINKS** (Eng)	(26) 02.02.96
28	Gerard **YEPES** (Spa)	(20) 25.08.02
31	Lorenzo **MALAGRIDA**	(19) 24.10.03
70	Simone **TRIMBOLI**	(20) 19.04.02

FORWARDS

9	Manuel **DE LUCA**	(24) 17.07.98
10	Francesco **CAPUTO**	(35) 06.08.87
18	Ignacio **PUSSETTO** (Arg)	(26) 21.12.95
23	Manolo **GABBIADINI**	(30) 26.11.91
27	Fabio **QUAGLIARELLA**	(39) 31.01.83
37	Mehdi **LERIS** (Fra)	(24) 23.05.98

COACH

Dejan **STANKOVIC** (Srb)	(44) 11.09.78

SASSUOLO

GOALKEEPERS

25	Gianluca **PEGOLO**	(41) 25.03.81
30	Gioele **ZACCHI**	(19) 10.07.03
47	Andrea **CONSIGLI**	(35) 27.01.87
64	Alessandro **RUSSO**	(21) 31.03.01

DEFENDERS

3	Riccardo **MARCHIZZA**	(24) 26.03.98
5	Kaan **AYHAN** (Tur)	(28) 10.11.94
6	**ROGERIO** (Bra)	(24) 13.01.98
13	Gian Marco **FERRARI**	(30) 15.02.92
17	Mert **MULDUR** (Tur)	(23) 03.04.99
19	Filippo **ROMAGNA**	(25) 26.05.97
22	Jeremy **TOLJAN** (Ger)	(28) 08.08.94
28	Martin **ERLIC** (Cro)	(24) 24.01.98
44	**RUAN** (Bra)	(23) 07.06.99
77	Giorgos **KYRIAKOPOULOS** (Gre)	(26) 05.02.96

MIDFIELDERS

7	**MATHEUS HENRIQUE** (Bra)	(24) 19.12.97
8	Abdou **HARROUI** (Mar)	(24) 13.01.98
14	Pedro **OBIANG** (Eqg)	(30) 27.03.92
16	Davide **FRATTESI**	(23) 22.09.99
23	Hamed **TRAORE** (Civ)	(22) 16.02.00
27	Maxime **LOPEZ** (Fra)	(24) 04.12.97
42	Kristian **THORSTVEDT** (Nor)	(23) 13.03.99

FORWARDS

9	Andrea **PINAMONTI**	(23) 19.05.99
10	Domenico **BERARDI**	(28) 01.08.94
11	Agustin **ALVAREZ** (Uru)	(21) 19.05.01
15	Emil **CEIDE** (Nor)	(21) 03.09.01
18	Janis **ANTISTE** (Fra)	(20) 18.08.02
35	Luca **D'ANDREA**	(18) 06.09.04
45	Armand **LAURIENTE** (Fra)	(23) 04.12.98
92	Gregoire **DEFREL** (Fra)	(31) 17.06.91

COACH

Alessio **DIONISI**	(42) 01.04.80

SPEZIA

GOALKEEPERS

1	Jeroen **ZOET** (Ned)	(31) 06.01.91
26	Leonardo **DIDO**	(18) 05.01.04
40	Petar **ZOVKO** (Bih)	(20) 25.03.02
69	Bartlomiej **DRAGOWSKI** (Pol)	(25) 19.08.97

DEFENDERS

2	Emil **HOLM** (Swe)	(22) 13.05.00
4	Ethan **AMPADU** (Wal)	(22) 14.09.00
7	Jacopo **SALA**	(30) 05.12.91
13	Arkadiusz **RECA** (Pol)	(27) 17.06.95
14	Jakub **KIWIOR** (Pol)	(22) 15.02.00
15	Petko **HRISTOV** (Bul)	(23) 01.03.99
20	Simone **BASTONI**	(26) 05.11.96
21	Salva **FERRER** (Spa)	(24) 21.01.98
27	Kelvin **AMIAN** (Fra)	(24) 08.02.98
29	Mattia **CALDARA**	(28) 05.05.94
43	Dimitrios **NIKOLAOU** (Gre)	(24) 13.08.98

MIDFIELDERS

6	Mehdi **BOURABIA** (Fra)	(31) 07.08.91
8	Albin **EKDAL** (Swe)	(33) 28.07.89
16	Julius **BECK** (Den)	(17) 27.04.05
24	Viktor **KOVALENKO** (Ukr)	(26) 14.02.96
28	Mikael **ELLERTSSON** (Isl)	(20) 11.03.02
30	Daniel **MALDINI**	(21) 11.10.01
31	Aimar **SHER** (Swe)	(19) 20.12.02
39	Aurelien **NGUIAMBA** (Fra)	(23) 18.01.99

FORWARDS

10	Daniele **VERDE**	(26) 20.06.96
11	Emmanuel **GYASI** (Gha)	(28) 11.01.94
18	M'Bala **NZOLA** (Ang)	(26) 18.08.96
33	Kevin **AGUDELO** (Col)	(24) 14.11.98
44	David **STRELEC** (Svk)	(21) 04.04.01
89	**LEANDRO SANCA** (Por)	(22) 04.01.00

COACH

Luca **GOTTI**	(55) 13.09.67

TORINO

GOALKEEPERS

1	Etrit **BERISHA** (Alb)	(33) 10.03.89
32	Vanja **MILINKOVIC-SAVIC** (Srb)	(25) 20.02.97
73	Matteo **FIORENZA**	(19) 15.06.03
89	Luca **GEMELLO**	(22) 03.07.00

DEFENDERS

3	Perr **SCHUURS** (Ned)	(22) 26.11.99
4	Alessandro **BUONGIORNO**	(23) 06.06.99
6	David **ZIMA** (Cze)	(22) 08.11.00
13	Ricardo **RODRIGUEZ** (Sui)	(30) 25.08.92
17	Wilfried **SINGO** (Civ)	(21) 25.12.00
19	Valentino **LAZARO** (Aut)	(26) 24.03.96
26	Koffi **DJIDJI** (Civ)	(29) 30.11.92
27	Mergim **VOJVODA** (Kos)	(27) 01.02.95
33	Sebastian **WADE** (Spa)	(19) 09.04.03
34	Ola **AINA** (Nga)	(26) 08.10.96

MIDFIELDERS

2	Brian **BAYEYE** (Fra)	(22) 30.06.00
10	Sasa **LUKIC** (Srb)	(26) 13.08.96
14	Emirhan **ILKHAN** (Tur)	(18) 01.06.04
16	Nikola **VLASIC** (Cro)	(25) 04.10.97
21	Michel **ADOPO** (Fra)	(22) 19.07.00
28	Samuele **RICCI**	(21) 21.08.01
36	Matthew **GARBETT** (Nzl)	(20) 13.04.02
59	Aleksey **MIRANCHUK** (Rus)	(27) 17.10.95
77	Karol **LINETTY** (Pol)	(27) 02.02.95

FORWARDS

7	Yann **KARAMOH** (Fra)	(24) 08.07.98
9	Antonio **SANABRIA** (Par)	(26) 04.03.96
11	Pietro **PELLEGRI**	(21) 17.03.01
20	Simone **EDERA**	(25) 09.01.97
23	Demba **SECK** (Sen)	(21) 10.02.01
49	Nemanja **RADONJIC** (Srb)	(26) 15.02.96

COACH

Ivan **JURIC** (Cro)	(47) 25.08.75

UDINESE

GOALKEEPERS

1	Marco **SILVESTRI**	(31) 02.03.91
20	Daniele **PADELLI**	(37) 25.10.85
99	Edoardo **PIANA**	(19) 29.09.03

DEFENDERS

2	Festy **EBOSELE** (Irl)	(20) 02.08.02
3	Adam **MASINA** (Mar)	(28) 02.01.94
13	Destiny **UDOGIE**	(19) 28.11.02
14	James **ABANKWAH** (Irl)	(18) 16.01.04
17	Bram **NUYTINCK** (Ned)	(32) 04.05.90
18	Nehuen **PEREZ** (Arg)	(22) 24.06.00
19	Kingsley **EHIZIBUE** (Nga)	(27) 25.05.95
23	Enzo **EBOSSE** (Cmr)	(23) 11.03.99
50	Rodrigo **BECAO** (Bra)	(26) 19.01.96
67	Axel **GUESSAND** (Fra)	(18) 06.11.04

MIDFIELDERS

4	Sandi **LOVRIC** (Svn)	(24) 28.03.98
5	Tolgay **ARSLAN** (Ger)	(32) 16.08.90
6	Jean-Victor **MAKENGO** (Fra)	(24) 12.06.98
8	Mato **JAJALO** (Bih)	(34) 25.05.88
11	**WALACE** (Bra)	(27) 04.04.95
24	Lazar **SAMARDZIC** (Ger)	(20) 24.02.02
29	Jaka **BIJOL** (Svn)	(23) 05.02.99
37	Roberto **PEREYRA** (Arg)	(31) 07.01.91
80	Simone **PAFUNDI**	(16) 14.03.06

FORWARDS

7	Isaac **SUCCESS** (Nga)	(26) 07.01.96
9	**BETO** (Por)	(24) 31.01.98
10	Gerard **DEULOFEU** (Spa)	(28) 13.03.94
30	Ilija **NESTOROVSKI** (Mkd)	(32) 12.03.90
39	**VIVALDO** (Por)	(17) 28.01.05

COACH

Andrea **SOTTIL**	(48) 04.01.74

VERONA

GOALKEEPERS

1	Lorenzo **MONTIPO**	(26) 20.02.96
16	Mattia **CHIESA**	(22) 16.07.00
22	Alessandro **BERARDI**	(31) 16.01.91
34	Simone **PERILLI**	(27) 07.01.95

DEFENDERS

3	Josh **DOIG** (Sco)	(20) 18.05.02
5	Davide **FARAONI**	(31) 25.10.91
6	Isak **HIEN** (Swe)	(23) 13.01.99
17	Federico **CECCHERINI**	(30) 11.05.92
21	Koray **GUNTER** (Ger)	(28) 16.08.94
23	Giangiacomo **MAGNANI**	(27) 04.10.95
27	Pawel **DAWIDOWICZ** (Pol)	(27) 20.05.95
29	Fabio **DEPAOLI**	(25) 24.04.97
32	Juan **CABAL** (Col)	(21) 08.01.01
42	Diego **COPPOLA**	(18) 28.12.03

MIDFIELDERS

4	Miguel **VELOSO** (Por)	(36) 11.05.86
7	Simone **VERDI**	(30) 12.07.92
8	Darko **LAZOVIC** (Srb)	(32) 15.09.90
10	Ajdin **HRUSTIC** (Aus)	(26) 05.07.96
14	Ivan **ILIC** (Srb)	(21) 17.03.01
18	Martin **HONGLA** (Cmr)	(24) 16.03.98
24	Filippo **TERRACCIANO**	(19) 08.02.03
28	Mateusz **PRASZELIK** (Pol)	(22) 26.09.00
61	Adrien **TAMEZE** (Fra)	(28) 04.02.94
72	Alessandro **CORTINOVIS**	(21) 25.01.01
77	Ibrahim **SULEMANA** (Gha)	(19) 22.05.03

FORWARDS

9	Thomas **HENRY** (Fra)	(28) 20.09.94
11	Kevin **LASAGNA**	(30) 10.08.92
19	Milan **DJURIC** (Bih)	(32) 22.05.90
20	Roberto **PICCOLI**	(21) 27.01.01
30	Yayah **KALLON** (Sle)	(21) 30.06.01

COACH

Salvatore **BOCHETTI**	(35) 30.11.86

(Ages as of 25.11.22)

Internationals

2022-23 UEFA NATIONS LEAGUE

Group A1

Sep 22 – Saint-Denis
France 2 (Mbappe 56, Giroud 65)
Austria 0
France: Maignan (Areola 46) – Kounde (Saliba 23), Varane, Badiashile, Clauss, Fofana, Tchouameni, Mendy, Griezmann (Dembele 78), Giroud (Nkunku 78), Mbappe (Kolo Muani 90+1).
Austria: Pentz – Trimmel, Lienhart, Alaba (Posch 69), Wober, Weimann (Ljubicic 50), Schlager, Seiwald, Sabitzer (Schmid 69), Arnautovic (Gregoritsch 64), Onisiwo (Baumgartner 64).

Sep 22 – Zagreb
Croatia 2 (Sosa 49, Majer 79)
Denmark 1 (Eriksen 77)
Croatia: Livakovic – Juranovic, Sutalo, Gvardiol, Sosa, Modric (Vida 90+3), Brozovic, Kovacic (Majer 77), Pasalic (Vlasic 71), Kramaric (Petkovic 71), Perisic (Orsic 71).
Denmark: Schmeichel – Wass (Kristensen 60), Andersen, Kjaer (Jensen 72), Christensen, Maehle, Hojbjerg, Delaney (Hojlund 60), Eriksen, Skov Olsen (Dolberg 89), Braithwaite (Damsgaard 60).

Sep 25 – Vienna
Austria 1 (Baumgartner 9)
Croatia 3 (Modric 6, Livaja 69, Lovren 72)
Austria: Lindner, Trimmel (Lainer 62), Posch (Wober 62), Danso, Alaba, Sabitzer, Schlager, Seiwald, Baumgartner (Schmid 82), Arnautovic (Saracevic 62), Gregoritsch (Onisiwo 82).
Croatia: Livakovic – Stanisic, Lovren, Gvardiol, Barisic (Sosa 62), Modric, Brozovic (Majer 18), Kovacic (Pasalic 85), Vlasic (Kramaric 84), Budimir (Livaja 62), Perisic.

Sep 25 – Copenhagen
Denmark 2 (Dolberg 34, Skov Olsen 39)
France 0
Denmark: Schmeichel – Kristensen (Bah 90+1), Andersen, Christensen, Maehle, Delaney (Kjaer 71), Eriksen, Hojbjerg, Skov Olsen (Braithwaite 71), Dolberg (Hojlund 59), Damsgaard (Lindstrom 59).
France: Areola – Pavard, Saliba (Clauss 46), Upamecano, Badiashile, Mendy (Truffert 65), Camavinga (Fofana 46), Tchouameni, Griezmann (Kolo Muani 81), Giroud (Nkunku 65), Mbappe.

Final Standings

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Croatia*	6	4	1	1	8	6	13
Denmark	6	4	0	2	9	5	12
France	6	1	2	3	5	7	5
Austria (R)	6	1	1	4	6	10	4

**Qualify for June 2023 Nations League finals*

Group A2

Sep 24 – Zaragoza
Spain 1 (Alba 55)
Switzerland 2 (Akanji 21, Embolo 59)
Spain: Simon – Azpilicueta (Soler 87), E. Garcia, P. Torres, Alba, Busquets, Gavi, Pedri (M. Llorente 69), F. Torres (Yeremy 63), Asensio (Iglesias 63), Sarabia (Williams 63).
Switzerland: Sommer – Widmer, Akanji, Elvedi, Rodriguez (Steffen 46), Freuler, Xhaka, Shaqiri (Ndoye 68), Sow (Zakaria 68), Vargas (Aebischer 78), Embolo (Seferovic 87).

Sep 24 – Prague
Czech Republic 0
Portugal 4 (Dalot 33, 52, Fernandes 45+2, Jota 82)
Czech Republic: Vaclik – Coufal, Zima, Brabec (Kudela 22), Jemelka, Zeleny (Vlkanova 63), Kral, Soucek (Kuchta 77), Barak (Sevcik 63), Hlozek (Cerny 63), Schick.
Portugal: Costa – Dalot, Dias, Danilo (Mario 83), Rui, Carvalho (Palhinha 77), Neves, B. Silva (Horta 67), Fernandes (Nunes 77), Leao (Jota 67), Ronaldo.

Sep 27 – St Gallen
Switzerland 2 (Freuler 29, Embolo 30)
Czech Republic 1 (Schick 45)
Switzerland: Sommer – Widmer, Schar, Elvedi, Rodriguez, Freuler (Jashari 90+3), Xhaka, Shaqiri (Steffen 65), Sow (Zakaria 79), Vargas (Amdouni 79), Embolo (Seferovic 65).
Czech Republic: Vaclik (Stanek 46) – Coufal, Zima, Kudela (Havel 46), Jemelka, Kalvach (Kuchta 64), Soucek, Cerny (Sevcik 79), Barak (Provod 64), Vlkanova, Schick.

Sep 27 – Braga
Portugal 0
Spain 1 (Morata 88)
Portugal: Costa – Cancelo, Dias, Danilo, Mendes, Carvalho (Leao 78), Neves (Felix 89), B. Silva (Mario 73), Fernandes, Jota (Vitinha 78), Ronaldo.
Spain: Simon – Carvajal, Guillamon (Busquets 46), P. Torres, Gaya, Soler (Pedri 60), Rodri, Koke (Gavi 60), F. Torres (Williams 73), Morata, Sarabia (Yeremy 60).

Final Standings

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Spain*	6	3	2	1	8	5	11
Portugal	6	3	1	2	11	3	10
Switzerland	6	3	0	3	6	9	9
Czech Rep (R)	6	1	1	4	5	13	4

**Qualify for June 2023 Nations League finals*

Group A3

Sep 23 – Leipzig
Germany 0
Hungary 1 (Ad. Szalai 17)
Germany: Ter Stegen – Hofmann, Sule, Rudiger, Raum, Kimmich, Gundogan (Musiala 69), Gnabry (Kehrer 46), Muller (Nmecha 85), Sane, Werner (Havertz 69).
Hungary: Gulacsi – Fiola, Lang, Orban, At. Szalai, Kerkez, Schafer, A. Nagy (Styles 78), Szoboszlai (Nego 85), Gazdag (Kleinheisler 67), Ad. Szalai (Adam 67).

Sep 23 – Milan
Italy 1 (Raspadori 68)
England 0
Italy: Donnarumma – Di Lorenzo, Toloi, Bonucci, Acerbi, Dimarco (Frattesi 89), Barella (Pobega 63), Jorginho (Emerson 89), Cristante, Scamacca (Gnonto 63), Raspadori (Gabbiadini 81).
England: Pope – James, Walker (Shaw 72), Dier, Maguire, Saka (Grealish 72), Rice, Bellingham, Sterling, Foden, Kane.

Sep 26 – London
England 3 (Shaw 72, Mount 75, Kane 83 pen)
Germany 3 (Gundogan 52 pen, Havertz 67, 87)
England: Pope – James, Stones (Walker 37), Dier, Maguire, Shaw, Rice, Bellingham (Henderson 90+1), Sterling (Mount 66), Foden (Saka 66), Kane.
Germany: Ter Stegen – Kehrer, Schlotterbeck, Sule, Raum (Gosens 68), Kimmich (Muller 79), Gundogan, Hofmann (Werner 46), Musiala, Sane (Gnabry 68), Havertz (Bella-Kotchap 90+1).

Sep 26 – Budapest
Hungary 0
Italy 2 (Raspadori 27, Dimarco 52)
Hungary: Gulacsi – Fiola, Lang, Orban, At. Szalai, Kerkez (Gazdag 57), A. Nagy (Styles 46), Schafer, Nego (Bolla 75), Szoboszlai (Kleinheisler 85), Ad. Szalai (Adam 75).
Italy: Donnarumma – Di Lorenzo (Mazzocchi 90), Toloi, Bonucci, Acerbi (Bastoni 46), Dimarco, Barella, Jorginho (Pobega 72), Cristante, Raspadori (Scamacca 72), Gnonto (Gabbiadini 65).

Final Standings

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Italy*	6	3	2	1	8	7	11
Hungary	6	3	1	2	8	5	10
Germany	6	1	4	1	1	9	7
England (R)	6	0	3	3	4	10	3

**Qualify for June 2023 Nations League finals*

Group A4

Sep 22 – Brussels
Belgium 2 (De Bruyne 10, Batshuayi 37)
Wales 1 (Moore 50)
Belgium: Courtois – Meunier, Debast, Alderweireld, Vertonghen, Carrasco (Mertens 65), Witsel, Tielemans (Vanaken 75), De Bruyne (De Ketelaere 90+1), E. Hazard (Trossard 65), Batshuayi (Openda 65).
Wales: Hennessey – C. Roberts, Mepham, Rodon, Norrington-Davies (T. Roberts 84), N. Williams, Ampadu, Smith (Morrell 66), Johnson, James, Moore (Bale 66).

Sep 22 – Warsaw
Poland 0
Netherlands 2 (Gakpo 14, Bergwijn 60)
Poland: Szczesny – Bednarek, Glik, Kiwior, Frankowski (Bereszynski 79), Krychowiak, Linetty (Milik 46), Zalewski (Skoras 79), S. Szymanski (Klich 70), Zielinski (Legowski 86), Lewandowski.
Netherlands: Pasveer – Dumfries, Timber, Van Dijk, Ake, Blind, Koopmeiners (Berghuis 6, Taylor 75), De Jong (De Roon 46), Gakpo, Bergwijn (Weghorst 75), Depay (Janssen 52).

Sep 25 – Amsterdam
Netherlands 1 (Van Dijk 73)
Belgium 0
Netherlands: Pasveer – Dumfries, Timber (De Vrij 65), Van Dijk, Ake (Malacia 46), Blind, De Roon, Klaassen (Gravenberch 90+2), Berghuis (Gakpo 31), Bergwijn, Janssen (Taylor 46).
Belgium: Courtois – Meunier (Carrasco 46), Debast, Alderweireld, Vertonghen, Castagne (Lukebakio 82), Witsel, Onana (Tielemans 74), De Bruyne, E. Hazard (Trossard 64), Batshuayi (De Ketelaere 46).

Sep 25 – Cardiff
Wales 0
Poland 1 (Swiderski 58)
Wales: Hennessey – C. Roberts (Thomas 85), Cabango, Rodon, Norrington-Davies (Moore 58), N. Williams, Morrell, Levitt (Colwill 72), Johnson, James, Bale.
Poland: Szczesny – Bereszynski (Gumny 90), Bednarek, Glik, Kiwior, Zalewski, Krychowiak, Zurkowski (S. Szymanski 83), Zielinski, Swiderski (Piatek 65), Lewandowski.

Final Standings

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Netherlands*	6	5	1	0	14	6	16
Belgium	6	3	1	2	11	8	10
Poland	6	2	1	3	6	12	7
Wales (R)	6	0	1	5	6	11	1

**Qualify for June 2023 Nations League finals*

Group B1

Sep 24 – Yerevan
Armenia 0
Ukraine 5 (Tymchyk 22, Zubkov 57, Dovbyk 69, 84, Ignatenko 81)
Armenia: Yurchenko – Hambardzumyan, Mkoyan (Voskanyan 75), Calisir, Margaryan (Monroy 75), Barseghyan (Shaghoyan 63), Dashyan, Grigoryan, Bayramyan, Bichakhchyan (Harutyunyan 46), Zelarayan (Serobyan 82).
Ukraine: Lunin – Tymchyk, Zabarnyi, Kryvtsov (Matviyenko 76), Kacharaba, Mykolenko, Sydorchuk (Pikhalyonok 46), Ignatenko, Zubkov (Mudryk 71), Tsygankov (Yarmolenko 67), Yaremchuk (Dovbyk 67).

Sep 24 - Glasgow
Scotland 2 (Hendry 49, Christie 82 pen)
Republic of Ireland 1 (Egan 18)
Scotland: Gordon – Hickey (Ralston 58), Hendry, McKenna, Tierney (Taylor 42), McTominay, McGregor, McGinn, Christie (McLean 85), Armstrong (Fraser 58), Dykes (Adams 85).
Republic of Ireland: Bazunu – Doherty (Coleman 76), Collins, Egan, O'Shea, McClean (Brady 83), Molumby (Alan Browne 76), Cullen, Knight, Obafemi (Ogbene 60), Parrott (Robinson 76).

Sept 27 – Krakow
Ukraine 0
Scotland 0
Ukraine: Lunin – Tymchyk, Zabarnyi, Matviyenko, Mykolenko, Malinovskyi (Pikhalyonok 87), Stepanenko, Ignatenko, Yarmolenko (Zubkov 87), Mudryk (Tsygankov 75), Dovbyk (Yaremchuk 75).
Scotland: Gordon – Hickey (Ralston 90+1), Hendry, Porteous, Taylor (Kingsley 71), Jack (Armstrong 72), McLean, McGregor, McGinn, Fraser (Christie 72), Adams (Dykes 79).

Sep 27 – Dublin
Republic of Ireland 3 (Egan 18, Obafemi 52, Brady 90+1 pen)
Armenia 2 (Dashyan 71, Spertsyan 73)
Republic of Ireland: Bazunu – Doherty, Collins, Egan, O'Shea, Brady, Molumby (Hourihane 51), Hendrick, Knight (Browne 76), Obafemi (Hogan 86), Parrott (Robinson 76).
Armenia: Yurchenko – Hambardzumyan, Mkoyan (Voskanyan 60), Haroyan, Calisir (Muradyan 82), Monroy (Dashyan 60), Bayramyan, Grigoryan, Spertsyan, Barseghyan (Shaghoyan 82), Zelarayan (Bichakhchyan 69).
Sent off: Hambardzumyan 89, Dashyan 90.

Final Standings

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Scotland (P)	6	4	1	1	11	5	13
Ukraine	6	3	2	1	10	4	11
Rep of Ireland	6	2	1	3	8	7	7
Armenia (R)	6	1	0	5	4	17	3

Group B2

Sep 24 – Tel Aviv
Israel 2 (Weissman 46, Baribo 90+2)
Albania 1 (Uzuni 88)
Israel: Glazer – Dasa, Vitor (Shlomo 87), Goldberg, Leidner (Glazer 73), Kanichowsky, Lavi, Karzev (Gropper 73), Abada (Atzili 77), Haziza, Weissman (Baribo 86).
Albania: Strakosha – Balliu (Veseli 46), Ismajli, Ajeti (Mihaj 78), Hysaj, Gjasula, Abrashi (Ramadani 67), Asllani (Bajrami 67), Laci, Cikalleshi (Uzuni 78), Broja.

Sept 27 – Tirana
Albania 1 (Lenjani 35)
Iceland 1 (Anderson 90+7)
Albania: Strakosha – Balliu, Ismajli, Gjasula (Mihaj 83), Veseli, Lenjani (Hysaj 77), Abrashi (Laci 69), Ramadani, Bajrami (Cokaj 83), Uzuni, Cikalleshi (Broja 69).
Iceland: Runarsson – Palsson, A. Gunnarsson, Magnusson, D. Olafsson, Johannesson (Haraldsson 69), Bi. Bjarnason (A. Gudjohnsen 81), Helgason, Thorsteinsson (Gretarsson 12), A. Sigurdsson (Ellertsson 70), Finnbogason (Anderson 70).
Sent off: A. Gunnarsson 10.

Final Standings

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Israel (P)	4	2	2	0	8	6	8
Iceland	4	0	4	0	6	6	4
Albania	4	0	2	2	4	6	2
Russia* (R)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

**Disqualified and automatically relegated*

Group B3

Sep 23 – Helsinki
Finland 1 (Pukki 12)
Romania 1 (Tanase 52)
Finland: Hradecky – Alho, L. Vaisanen, Ivanov, R. Jensen, Uronen (Niskanen 88), Valakari (Lingman 57), Kamara, Schuller (Kairinen 88), F. Jensen (Kallman 57), Pukki (Pohjanpalo 75).
Romania: Radu – Ratiu, Rus, Nedelcearu, Bancu, R. Marin, M. Marin (Cicaldau 90+1), Tanase (Stanciu 66), Man (Cordea 66), Alibec (Puscas 66), Sorescu (Dragus 79).

Sep 23 – Zenica
Bosnia & Herzegovina 1 (Demirovic 45+1)
Montenegro 0
Bosnia & Herzegovina: Sehic – Dedic (Susic 90), Hadzikadunic, Sanicanin, Kolasinac, Besic (Kodro-Maksumic 73), Pjanic (Cimirot 67), Stevanovic (Gojak 73), Hadziahmetovic, Demirovic, Dzeko.
Montenegro: Mijatovic – Vesovic, Vujacic, Tomasevic, Radunovic, Scekic (Haksabanovic 70), Marusic, Jankovic (Camaj 81), Savicevic (Vukcevic 46), Osmajic (Mugosa 46), Jovetic (Djurdjevic 70).

Sep 26 – Podgorica
Montenegro 0
Finland 2 (Antman 47, Kallman 53)
Montenegro: Mijatovic – Vesovic, Tomasevic, Vujacic, Radunovic (Balic 25), Jovovic (Vukcevic 62), Jankovic, Vukcevic, Haksabanovic (Camaj 32), Mugosa (Djurdjevic 62), Jovetic (Scekic 32).
Sent off: Tomasevic 17.
Finland: Hradecky – Alho, L. Vaisanen, Ivanov, R. Jensen, Kallman (Hostikka 74), Kairinen, Kamara, Lingman (Pohjanpalo 46), Antman (Soiri 88), Pukki (Forss 74).

Sep 26 – Bucharest
Romania 4 (Man 38, Puscas 73, 86, Ratiu 79)
Bosnia & Herzegovina 1 (Dzeko 77)
Romania: Radu – Ratiu, Rus (Nedelcearu 83), Burca, Bancu, R. Marin (Baluta 64), Olaru, Man (Cordea 64), Stanciu, Sorescu (Camora 56), Alibec (Puscas 64).
Bosnia & Herzegovina: Vasilj – Dedic, Serbecic, Kovacevic (Sanicanin 25), Milicevic (Duljevic 46), Civic (Kolasinac 61), Saric (Dzeko 71), Cimirot (Danilovic 46), Gojak, Prevljak, Demirovic.

Final Standings

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Bosnia & Herz (P)	6	3	2	1	8	8	11
Finland	6	2	2	2	8	6	8
Montenegro	6	2	1	3	6	6	7
Romania (R)	6	2	1	3	6	8	7

Group B4

Sep 24 – Ljubljana
Slovenia 2 (Sporar 69, Sesko 81)
Norway 1 (Haaland 47)
Slovenia: Oblak – Karnicnik (Brekalo 90+3), Blazic, Bijol, Sikosek, Stojanovic, Cerin (Stankovic 90+3), Kurtic, Verbic (Lovric 71), Sporar (Crnigoj 88), Sesko.
Norway: Nyland – Ryerson, Hanche-Olsen, Ostigard, Meling, Berge, Odegaard (Aursnes 71), Thorstvedt (Thorsby 61), Elyounoussi (Moller Daehli 70), Sorloth (Larsen 62), Haaland.

Sep 24 – Belgrade
Serbia 4 (A. Mitrovic 18, 45+1, 48, Lukic 70)
Sweden 1 (Claesson 15)
Serbia: V. Milinkovic-Savic – Masovic, S. Mitrovic, Babic, Zivkovic (Lazovic 46), Lukic, S. Milinkovic -Savic, Kostic (Ilic 84), Tadic (S. Mitrovic II 84), A. Mitrovic (Racic 72), Vlahovic (Jovic 90).
Sweden: Olsen – Sundgren, Hien, Lindelof, Claesson (Elanga 64), Cajuste (K. Olsson 46), Svanberg, Augustinsson, Kulusevski (Ishak 84), Forsberg (Karlstrom 73), Gyokeres (Quaison 64).

Sep 27 – Solna
Sweden 1 (Forsberg 42)
Slovenia 1 (Sesko 28)
Sweden: Olsen – J. Andersson, Hien (Ishak 88), Lindelof, Augustinsson, Claesson (Elanga 70), K. Olsson (Svanberg 79), Karlstrom, Forsberg, Kulusevski, Quaison (Gyokeres 70).
Slovenia: Oblak – Karnicnik, Blazic, Bijol, Sikosek (Balkovec 64), Stojanovic, Cerin, Stankovic (Elsnik 71), Verbic (Lovric 85), Mlakar (Crnigoj 64), Sesko.

Sep 27 – Oslo
Norway 0
Serbia 2 (Vlahovic 42, A. Mitrovic 54)
Norway: Nyland – Ryerson (Pedersen 57), Hanche-Olsen (Berg 78), Ostigard, Meling (Bjorkan 74), Aursnes (Ajer 57), Berge, Odegaard, Elyounoussi (Larsen 57), Sorloth, Haaland.
Serbia: V. Milinkovic-Savic – Veljkovic, S. Mitrovic (Jovic 90+3), Pavlovic (Babic 89), Zivkovic (Lazovic 72), Lukic, Ilic, Kostic (Radonjic 72), Tadic (Djuricic 90+3), A. Mitrovic, Vlahovic.

Final Standings

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Serbia (P)	6	4	1	1	13	5	13
Norway	6	3	1	2	7	7	10
Slovenia	6	1	3	2	6	10	6
Sweden (R)	6	1	1	4	7	11	4

Group C1

Sep 22 – Istanbul
Turkey 3 (Under 16 pen, Chanot 39 og, Yuksek 87)
Luxembourg 3 (M. Martins 8, Sinani 37, Rodrigues 69)
Turkey: Cakir – Celik, Ayhan, Soyuncu (Cigerci 46), Elmali, Under (Akgun 78), Kadioglu, Kokcu (Yuksek 81), Akturkoglu (Dursun 72), Unal, Dervisoglu (Kahveci 46).
Luxembourg: Moris – M. Martins (Bohnert 53), Chanot (Gerson 46), Jans, Pinto, V. Thill (Rupil 75), Barreiro, S. Thill, Borges Sanches, Sinani, Rodrigues (Skenderovic 85).

Sep 22 – Vilnius
Lithuania 1 (Slivka 41)
Faroe Islands 1 (Andreasen 22)
Lithuania: Bartkus –Mikoliunas (Baravykas 82), Klimavicius, Girdvainis, Barauskas, Slivka (Simkus 60), Megelaitis (Vorobjovas 46), Lasickas (Dolznikov 76), Novikovas, Golubickas (Milasius 76), Cernych.
Faroe Islands: Nielsen – Rolantsson, Askham, G. Vatnhamar, Davidsen, Bjartalio, Andreasen, Joensen (Hansen 90+1), M. Olsen (Mikkelsen 82), Edmundsson (Johannesen 77), K. Olsen (Nattestad 90+1).

Sep 25 – Luxembourg
Luxembourg 1 (Rodrigues 88)
Lithuania 0
Luxembourg: Moris – M. Martins (Bohnert 90), Chanot, Jans, Pinto, V. Thill (Gerson 79), Barreiro, S. Thill (Pimentel 90+6), Borges Sanches (Rupil 90), Sinani, Rodrigues.
Lithuania: Bartkus – Baravykas (Mikoliunas 79), Satkus, Girdvainis, Barauskas (Zebrauskas 43), Simkus, Vorobjovas, Slivka (Kalinauskas 78), Novikovas, Golubickas (Dolznikov 71), Cernych.

Sep 25 – Torshavn
Faroe Islands 2 (V. Davidsen 51, Edmundsson 59)
Turkey 1 (Gurler 89)
Faroe Islands: Gestsson – Rolantsson, Vatnsdal, G. Vatnhamar, Davidsen, Bjartalio, S. Vatnhamar, Andreasen, Joensen (Mikkelsen 57), M. Olsen (Johannesen 90+4), Edmundsson (K. Olsen 70).
Turkey: Bayindir – Celik, Kabak, Ayhan, Elmali (Bozok 82), Kadioglu, Kutlu (Dervisoglu 59), Kahveci, Akgun (Yuksek 60), Akturkoglu (Gurler 60), Dursun.

Final Standings

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Turkey (P)	6	4	1	1	18	5	13
Luxembourg	6	3	2	1	9	7	11
Faroe Islands	6	2	2	2	7	10	8
Lithuania*	6	0	1	5	2	14	1

**Enter March 2023 relegation play-outs*

Group C2

Sep 24 – Belfast
Northern Ireland 2 (Whyte 82, Magennis 90+3)
Kosovo 1 (Muriqi 58)
Northern Ireland: Peacock-Farrell – Bradley, McNair, J. Evans, Flanagan, Lewis (Ferguson 76), C. Evans (Whyte 76), Davis (McCann 90+1), Saville (Thompson 67), Charles (Lavery 76), Magennis.
Kosovo: Muric – Hadergjonaj, Fazliji, Aliti, Rrudhani, Celina, Dresevic, Muslija (Loshaj 78), Rashica (Zeneli 68), Rashani (Bytyqi 87), Muriqi.

Sep 24 – Larnaca
Cyprus 1 (Tzionis 18)
Greece 0
Cyprus: Panayi – Andreou, Katelaris, Roberge, Ioannou (Antoniades 76), Kyriakou, Kastanos (Gogic 75), Artymatas, Loizou (Charalampous 58), Tzionis (Karo 64), Sotiriou (Kakoulli 76).
Greece: Vlachodimos – Baldock, Mavropanos, Hatzidiakos, Tsimikas, Bakasetas (Ioannidis 58), Siopis (Bouchalakis 46), Kourbelis (Chatzigiovanis 77), Masouras, Douvikas (Fountas 46), Pelkas (Alexandropoulos 78).

Sep 27 – Athens
Greece 3 (Pelkas 14, Masouras 55, Mantalos 80)
Northern Ireland 1 (Lavery 18)
Greece: Vlachodimos – Baldock, Mavropanos, Hatzidiakos, Tsimikas, Bakasetas (Bouchalakis 76), Kourbelis, Mantalos (Goutas 90+2), Masouras (Chatzigiovanis 76), Pelkas (Fountas 67), Ioannidis (Douvikas 67).
Northern Ireland: Peacock-Farrell – Bradley (Charles 68), McNair, J. Evans, Flanagan, Lewis (Ferguson 76), Thompson (Saville 9), Davis, McCann, Lavery (Whyte 67), Magennis (McMenamin 76).

Sep 27 – Prishtina
Kosovo 5 (Muslija 22, Rrudhani 45+1, Rashani 47, Muriqi 52, 84)
Cyprus 1 (Roberge 81)
Kosovo: Ujkani – Hadergjonaj (Krasniqi 89), Rrahmani (Dresevic 64), Kryeziu, Rrudhani, Celina, Fazliji, Muslija (Emerllahu 89), Rashani (Bytyqi 64), Zeneli (Rashica 81), Muriqi.
Cyprus: Panayi – Andreou, Katelaris, Roberge, Ioannou, Kyriakou (Charalampous 46), Artymatas, Kastanos (Gogic 59), Loizou (Christofi 46), Tzionis (Papoulis 59), Sotiriou (Kakoulli 72).

Final Standings

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Greece (P)	6	5	0	1	10	2	15
Kosovo	6	3	0	3	11	8	9
Northern Ireland	6	1	2	3	7	10	5
Cyprus*	6	1	2	3	4	12	5

**Enter March 2023 relegation play-outs*

Group C3

Sep 22 – Astana
Kazakhstan 2 (Gabyshev 29, Zainutdinov 79)
Belarus 1 (Savitski 45+3)
Kazakhstan: Shatskiy – Maliy, Marochkin, Alip, Gabyshev (Kairov 68), Darabayev, Tagybergen, Vorogovskiy, Orazov (Astanov 75), Zainutdinov (Kuat 87), Aimbetov (Zhumabek 87).
Sent off: Tagybergen 90.
Belarus: Khatkevich – Shevchenko (Malkevich 84), Polyakov, Shvetsov, Yudenkov, Pechenin, Klimovich (Lisakovich 61), Yablonski, Ebong, Savitski (Gromyko 76), Bogomolski (Bakhar 61).

Sep 22 – Trnava
Slovakia 1 (Jirka 90+3 pen)
Azerbaijan 2 (Dadasov 44, Haqqverdi 90+5)
Slovakia: Rodak – Vallo, Satka, Skriniar, Hancko, Bero (Duris 83), Lobotka, Benes (Mraz 83), Regali (Herc 63), Jirka, Bozenik (Zrel'ak 74).
Azerbaijan: Mahammadaliyev – Haqqverdi, Mustafazade, B. Huseynov, Cafarquliyev, Almeyda (Isaev 72), Eddy, Mahmudov (Jamalov 83), Kokcu (Seydiyev 72), Seydayev, Dadasov (Qurbanli 77).

Sep 25 – Backa Topola
Slovakia 1 (Zrel'ak 65)
Belarus 1 (Bakhar 45)
Slovakia: Rodak – Pekarik, Satka, Skriniar, Hancko, Kucka (Mraz 87), Lobotka, Jirka, Benes (Hrosovsky 74), Duric (Bero 74), Bozenik (Zrel'ak 60).
Belarus: Plotnikov – Polyakov, Yudenkov, Khadarkevich, Nechaev, Yablonski, Bocherov, Malkevich, Klimovich, Gromyko (Pechenin 34), Bakhar (Bogomolski 68, Savitski 89).

Sep 25 – Baku
Azerbaijan 3 (Marochkin 66 og, Ozobic 74, Nuriyev 90+1)
Kazakhstan 0
Azerbaijan: Mahammadaliyev – Haqqverdi, Mustafazade, B. Huseynov, Cafarquliyev (Bayramov 57), Eddy (Isaev 46), Mahmudov, Kokcu (Emreli 46), Ozobic (Nuriyev 88), Seydayev, Dadasov (Qurbanli 46).
Kazakhstan: Shatskiy – Kairov, Bystrov, Marochkin, Alip, Dosmagambetov (Vorogovskiy 67), Orazov (Zharynbetov 80), Darabayev (Sadybekov 80), Kuat, Astanov (Aimbetov 67), Zhumabek (Maliy 39).
Sent off: Alip 35.

Final Standings

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Kazakhstan (P)	6	4	1	1	8	6	13
Azerbaijan	6	3	1	2	7	4	10
Slovakia	6	2	1	3	5	6	7
Belarus*	6	0	3	3	3	7	3

**Enter March 2023 relegation play-outs*

Group C4

Sep 23 – Tbilisi
Georgia 2 (Miovski 35 og, Kvaratskhelia 64)
North Macedonia 0
Georgia: Mamardashvili – Kakabadze, Kverkvelia, Kashia, Khocholava (Lochoshvili 72), Tsitaishvili (Azarov 72), Aburjania (Mamuchashvili 86), Kvekveskiri, Davitashvili (Mekvabishvili 78), Kvaratskhelia, Zivzivadze (Mikautadze 78).
North Macedonia: Dimitrievski – Zajkov, Velkoski (Serafimov 72), Musliu, Alioski, Ashkovski (Todoroski 68), Bardhi (Elezi 84), Spirovski (Trajkovski 68), Elmas, M. Ristovski (Atanasov 72), Miovski.

Sep 23 – Razgrad
Bulgaria 5 (Antov 23, Despodov 36, Kirilov 52, Stefanov 55, Petkov 81)
Gibraltar 1 (R. Chipolina 26)
Bulgaria: Naumov – Turitsov (Stoyanov 60), P. Hristov, Antov, Nedyalkov, Petkov, Gruev (Karabelyov 71), Krastev, Despodov (Rusev 60), Kirilov (Minchev 83), Stefanov (Iliev 71).
Gibraltar: Coleing – Wiseman, R. Chipolina, Lopes, Olivero, Britto (J. Chipolina 83), Ronan, Torrilla (Sergeant 63), Annesley (Jolley 63), Casciaro (Styche 63), Walker (Pozo 72).

Sep 26 – Skopje
North Macedonia 0
Bulgaria 1 (Despodov 50)
North Macedonia: Dimitrievski – Todoroski, Bejtulai, Zajkov, Musliu, Alioski, Bardhi, Elmas, Trajkovski (Ashkovski 22, Babunski 85), Miovski (Spirovski 61), M. Ristovski (Doriev 61).
Sent off: Todoroski 14.
Bulgaria: Naumov – Popov (Stoyanov 82), Galabov, Antov, Nedyalkov, Petkov, Gruev, Karabelyov (Iliev 46), Stefanov (Krastev 46), Kirilov (Rusev 89), Despodov (Yordanov 90+3).

Sep 26 – Gibraltar
Gibraltar 1 (Annesley 75)
Georgia 2 (Kvaratskhelia 19 pen, Tsitaishvili 48)
Gibraltar: Banda – Wiseman (Sergeant 73), R. Chipolina, Lopes, Olivero, Britto (J. Chipolina 84), Ronan (Styche 63), Torrilla (Morgan 84), Annesley, Walker, Casciaro.
Georgia: Loria (Mamardashvili 46) – Kakabadze, Kashia, Khocholava, Lobzhanidze (Lochoshvili 89), Kvekveskiri, Mekvabishvili, Azarov (Davitashvili 60), Tsitaishvili, Kvaratskhelia (Qazaishvili 72), Zivzivadze (Mikautadze 60).

Final Standings

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Georgia (P)	6	5	1	0	16	3	16
Bulgaria	6	2	3	1	10	8	9
North Macedonia	6	2	1	3	7	7	7
Gibraltar*	6	0	1	5	3	18	1

**Enter March 2023 relegation play-outs*

Group D1

Sep 22 – Riga
Latvia 1 (J. Ikaunieks 55)
Moldova 2 (Revenco 26, Nicolaescu 45)
Latvia: Steinbors – Savalnieks, Cernomordijs, Dubra, Jurkovskis (Stuglis 88), Jaunzems (Krollis 57), Emsis, Tobers, Ciganiks (D. Ikaunieks 82), Gutkovskis, J. Ikaunieks.
Moldova: Celeadnic – Revenco, Craciun, Posmac, Armas, Platica (Jardan 84), Ionita, Caimacov, Motpan (Cociuc 84), Nicolaescu (Postolachi 73), Damascan (Cojocaru 90+5).

Sep 22 – Vaduz
Liechtenstein 0
Andorra 2 (Rosas 4, Cerves 80)
Liechtenstein: Buchel – Graber (Netzer 46), Malin, Hofer, Traber, Goppel, Luchinger (M. Wolfinger 78), Frommelt (F. Wolfinger 46), Meier (Kardesoglu 46), Hasler, Gassner.
Andorra: Alvarez – C. Rubio, Llovera, Alavedra, Cervos, Cucu (Bernat 77), X. Vieira (Rebes 77), Vales (M. Vieira 84), A. Martinez, Pujol (Pomares 66), Rosas (J. Rubio 84).

Sep 25 – Andorra la Vella
Andorra 1 (Rosas 81)
Latvia 1 (Gutkovskis 50)
Andorra: Alvarez – De Pablos, Llovera, Vales, Alavedra (Bernat 73), Pomares, J. Rubio (A. Martinez 54), M. Vieira (Blanco 73), Rebes (Pujol 87), Cervos, Cucu (Rosas 54).
Latvia: Steinbors – Savalnieks, Dubra, Stuglis, Jurkovskis, J. Ikaunieks, Emsis (Tarasovs 82), Tobers, Ciganiks (D. Ikaunieks 85), Gutkovskis, Krollis.

Sep 25 – Chisinau
Moldova 2 (Stina 90+2, 90+4)
Liechtenstein 0
Moldova: Celeadnic – Belousov (Cojocaru 81), Craciun, Bolohan (Posmac 81), Armas, Platica, Rata, Ionita, Motpan (Postolachi 57), Nicolaescu (Stina 76), Damascan.
Liechtenstein: Buchel – Grunenfelder, Hofer, Traber, Netzer (Graber 57), Luchinger (M. Wolfinger 56), Sele (Hilti 86), Goppel, Hasler, Beck (Lorenz 86), Gassner (Yildiz 56).

Final Standings

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Latvia (P)	6	4	1	1	12	5	13
Moldova	6	4	1	1	10	6	13
Andorra	6	2	2	2	6	7	8
Liechtenstein	6	0	0	6	1	11	0

Group D2

Sep 23 – Tallinn
Estonia 2 (Sappinen 45+6 pen, Anier 86)
Malta 1 (Teuma 51 pen)
Estonia: Hein – Ojamaa (Sinyavskiy 77), Purg,

Tamm, Mets, Kallaste (Teniste 46), Vastsuk (Miller 68), Soomets, Vassiljev, Zenjov (Kirss 90+4), Sappinen (Anier 68).
Malta: Bonello – Attard (Dimech 72), J. Borg, Pepe, J. Mbong, Guillaumier, Paiber (Degabriele 72), Camenzuli, Satariano (Montebello 89), Jones (S. Borg 46), Teuma.
Sent off: J. Borg 45.

Sep 26 – Serravalle
San Marino 0
Estonia 4 (Anier 38, 77, Teniste 56, Sappinen 66)
San Marino: Benedettini – Zafferani (Ma. Battistini 46), Franciosi, Palazzi, Tosi, Grandoni (D'Addario 46), Lunadei, Mi. Battistini (E. Golinucci 66), A. Golinucci (Mularoni 66), Tomassini (Vitaioli 84), Rinaldi.
Estonia: Hein – Teniste (Miller 61), Purg (Baranov 61), Tamm, Mets, Ojamaa, Vassiljev (Tunjov 83), Soomets, Vastsuk (Shein 68), Sappinen (Sorga 83), Anier.

Final Standings

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Estonia (P)	4	4	0	0	10	2	12
Malta	4	2	0	2	5	4	6
San Marino	4	0	0	4	0	9	0

EURO 2024 QUALIFIERS

Qualifying Draw

Group A
Spain, Scotland, Norway, Georgia, Cyprus

Group B
Netherlands, France, Republic of Ireland, Greece, Gibraltar

Group C
Italy, England, Ukraine, N. Macedonia, Malta

Group D
Croatia, Wales, Armenia, Turkey, Latvia

Group E
Poland, Czech Republic, Albania, Faroe Islands, Moldova

Group F
Belgium, Austria, Sweden, Azerbaijan, Estonia

Group G
Hungary, Serbia, Montenegro, Bulgaria, Lithuania

Group H
Denmark, Finland, Slovenia, Kazakhstan, Northern Ireland, San Marino

Group I
Switzerland, Israel, Romania, Kosovo, Belarus, Andorra

Group J
Portugal, Bosnia & Herzegovina, Iceland, Luxembourg, Slovakia, Liechtenstein

Match Dates

Matchday 1: 23–25 March 2023
Matchday 2: 26–28 March 2023
Matchday 3: 16–17 June 2023
Matchday 4: 19–20 June 2023
Matchday 5: 7–9 September 2023
Matchday 6: 10–12 September 2023
Matchday 7: 12–14 October 2023
Matchday 8: 15–17 October 2023
Matchday 9: 16–18 November 2023
Matchday 10: 19–21 November 2023

2022 AFF CHAMPIONSHIP QUALIFIERS

1st Leg

Nov 5 – Bandar Seri Begawan
Brunei 6 (Abdul Azizi 18, 33, Ramlli 60, 90+3, Salleh 75, Aminuddin 89)
Timor-Leste 2 (Mouzinho 45+1, Firth 65)

2nd Leg

Nov 8 – Bandar Seri Begawan
Timor-Leste 1 (Mouzinho 45)
Brunei 0
Brunei win 6-3 on aggregate

FRIENDLIES

Sep 21 – Bandar Seri Begawan
Brunei 0
Maldives 3 (Waheed 35, Mohamed 74, Raif 90+3)

Sep 21 – Serravalle
San Marino 0
Seychelles 0

Sep 21 – Ho Chi Minh City
Vietnam 4 (Nguyen van Quyet 37, Nguyen Thanh Nhan 50, Ho Tan Tai 71, Khuat van Khang 84)
Singapore 0

Sep 21 – Mong Kok
Hong Kong 2 (Sun Ming Him 34, Law Tsz Chun 35)
Myanmar 0

Sep 21 – Benghazi
Libya 0
Uganda 0

Sep 22 – Brisbane
Australia 1 (Mabil 32)
New Zealand 0

Sep 22 – Orleans
Comoros 0
Tunisia 1 (Khenissi 57)

Sep 22 – Maria Enzersdorf
Venezuela 0
Iceland 1 (Johanesson 87 pen)

Sep 22 – Almere
Suriname 2 (Te Vrede 25, Hilterman 90)
Nicaragua 1 (Quijano 88)

Sep 22 – Phnom Penh
Cambodia 0
Bangladesh 1 (Rakib 23)

Sep 23 – Amman
Iraq 1 (Hussein 85)
Oman 1 (Al Malki 82)
Oman win 4-3 on penalties

Sep 23 – Riffa
Bahrain 1 (Haram 29)
Cape Verde 2 (Diney 12, Mendes 55)

Sep 23 – Goyang
Cameroon 0
Uzbekistan 2 (Erkinov 24, Urunov 76)

Sep 23 – Goyang
South Korea 2 (Hwang Hee-chan 28, Son Heung-min 85)
Costa Rica 2 (Bennette 41, 63)

Sep 23 – Dusseldorf
Japan 2 (Kamada 24, Mitoma 88)
United States 0

Sep 23 – St Polten
Iran 1 (Taremi 79)
Uruguay 0

Sep 23 – Wiener Neustadt
Paraguay 1 (Balbuena 85)
United Arab Emirates 0

Sep 23 – Vienna
Qatar 0
Canada 2 (Larin 4, David 13)

Sep 23 – Murcia
Saudi Arabia 0
Ecuador 0

Sep 23 – Le Havre
Brazil 3 (Marquinhos 9, Richarlison 28, 40)
Ghana 0

Sep 23 – Alexandria
Egypt 3 (Salah 43, 67 pen, Mohamed 55)
Niger 0

Sep 23 – Barcelona
Morocco 2 (Boufal 66 pen, Sabiri 78)
Chile 0

Sep 23 – Rabat
Burkina Faso 1 (Traore 57)
DR Congo 0

Sep 23 – Bir El Djir
Algeria 1 (Slimani 79)
Guinea 0

Sep 23 – Bamako
Mali 1 (Toure 6)
Zambia 0

Sep 23 – Berrechid
Equatorial Guinea 0
Rwanda 0

Sep 23 – Amman
Jordan 2 (Samir 25, Al Naimat 42)
Syria 0

Sep 24 – Bandar Seri Begawan
Laos 1 (Bounkong 43)
Maldives 3 (Raif 11, Waheed 60, Nihan 68)

Sep 24 – So Kon Po
Hong Kong 0
Myanmar 0

Sep 24 – Florida
Argentina 3 (La. Martinez 16, Messi 45 pen, 69)
Honduras 0

Sep 24 – Bandung
Indonesia 3 (Klok 18, Aryanto 22, Drajad 56)
Curacao 2 (Janga 8, Bacuna 25)

Sep 24 – Johannesburg
South Africa 4 (Zwane 33, 64, Mayambela 49, Modiba 72)
Sierra Leone 0

Sep 24 – Bishkek
Kyrgyzstan 1 (Shurukov 24)
Russia 2 (Sobolev 30 pen, Utkin 89)

Sep 24 – Carriacou
Grenada 1 (Isaac 65)
St Vincent & Grenadines 3 (Stewart 24 pen, 31, Cunningham 68)

Sep 24 – Le Petit-Quevilly
Ivory Coast 2 (Fofana 60, Kessie 68 pen)
Togo 1 (Karim 85)

Sep 24 – Orleans
Bolivia 0
Senegal 2 (Dia 4, Mane 44 pen)

Sep 24 – Benghazi
Tanzania 1 (Msuva 29)
Uganda 0

Sep 24 – Ho Chi Minh City
India 1 (Kuruniyan 43)
Indonesia 1 (Ikhsan 37)

Sep 25 – Harrison
Colombia 4 (James 40, Sinisterra 57, Santos Borre 76, Asprilla 89)
Guatemala 1 (Santis 90)

Sep 25 – Pasadena
Mexico 1 (Lozano 85)
Peru 0

Sep 25 – Cairo
Niger 0
Liberia 0

Sep 25 – Auckland
New Zealand 0
Australia 2 (Duke 54, Cummings 80 pen)

Sep 26 – Amman
Syria 0
Iraq 1 (Hussein 27)

Sep 26 – Amman
Jordan 1 (Haddad 66 pen)
Oman 0

Sep 27 – Rabat
DR Congo 3 (Malango 70, Kayembe 73, Elia 75)
Sierra Leone 0

Sep 27 – Bandar Seri Begawan
Brunei 1 (Nazirrudin 26)
Laos 0

Sep 27 – Suwon
Uzbekistan 1 (Shomourodov 25)
Costa Rica 2 (Hernandez 90+2, Waston 90+4)

Sep 27 – Seoul
South Korea 1 (Son Heung-min 35)
Cameroon 0

Sep 27 – Kathmandu
Nepal 3 (Bista 18, 27, 37)
Bangladesh 1 (Sazzad 55)

Sep 27 – Dusseldorf
Japan 0
Ecuador 0

Sep 27 – Casablanca
Equatorial Guinea 2 (Bikoro 54 pen, 84)
Togo 2 (Henen 17, Fo-Doh Laba 29)

Sep 27 – Cibinong
Indonesia 2 (Drajad 3, Sulistyawan 87)
Curacao 1 (Antonisse 47)

Sep 27 – Maria Enzersdorf
Senegal 1 (Pouraliganji 55 og)
Iran 1 (Azmoun 64)

Sep 27 – Wiener Neustadt
United Arab Emirates 0
Venezuela 4 (Savarino 18, Rondon 25, Chancellor 34, Josef Martinez 77)

Sep 27 – Riffa
Bahrain 0
Panama 2 (Murillo 18, Diaz 46)

Sep 27 – Bratislava
Canada 0
Uruguay 2 (De la Cruz 6, Nunez 33)

Sep 27 – Johannesburg
South Africa 1 (Mokoena 38)
Botswana 0

Sep 27 – Vienna
Qatar 2 (Afif 59, Al Haydos 67)
Chile 2 (Sanchez 37, Vidal 78)

Sep 27 – Benghazi
Libya 2 (Ali Sola 21 pen, 59)
Tanzania 1 (Khamis 40)

Sep 27 – Murcia
Saudi Arabia 0
United States 0

Sep 27 – Casablanca
Burkina Faso 2 (Dayo 61, Traore 73)
Comoros 1 (Selemani 90+3)

Sep 27 – Lorca
Nicaragua 0
Ghana 1 (Fatawu Issahaku 35)

Sep 27 – Alexandria
Egypt 3 (Marmoush 38, Abdelmonem 57, Koka 90 pen)
Liberia 0

Sep 27 – Amiens
Ivory Coast 3 (Sangare 30, Doumbia 41, Fofana 45)
Guinea 1 (Diakhaby 52)

Sep 27 – Paris
Brazil 5 (Raphinha 11, 40, Richarlison 19, Neymar 29 pen, Pedro 74)
Tunisia 1 (Talbi 18)

Sep 27 – Seville
Paraguay 0
Morocco 0

Sep 27 – Bir El Djir
Algeria 2 (Mahrez 41 pen, Atal 61)
Nigeria 1 (Moffi 9)

Sep 27 – Ho Chi Minh City
Vietnam 3 (Phan van Duc 10, Nguyen van Toan 49, Nguyen van Quyet 70)
India 0

Sep 27 – Ta'Qali
Malta 2 (Satariano 84, Apap 86)
Israel 1 (Natcho 32 pen)

Sep 28 – Harrison
Argentina 3 (Alvarez 13, Messi 86, 89)
Jamaica 0

Sep 28 – Washington D.C.
El Salvador 1 (Larin 34 pen)
Peru 4 (Zavaleta 19 og, Lapadula 40 pen, Reyna 81, Cueva 86 pen)

Sep 28 – Houston
Honduras 2 (Samayoa 70 og, Solano 87)
Guatemala 1 (Lom 32)

Sep 28 – Santa Clara
Mexico 2 (Vega 6 pen, Arteaga 29)
Colombia 3 (Sinisterra 49, 52, Barrios 68)

Oct 1 – Kingstown
St Vincent & Grenadines 1 (Thomas 15)
Grenada 5 (Isaac 30, 34, 36, Ganness 81, Pierre 90+1)

Oct 22 – Abu Dhabi
Saudi Arabia 1 (Al Shehri 85)
North Macedonia 0

Club football
EUROPE

2022-23 UEFA CHAMPIONS LEAGUE

Group A

Oct 4 – Liverpool
Liverpool 2 (Alexander-Arnold 7, Salah 53 pen)
Rangers 0

Oct 4 – Amsterdam
Ajax 1 (Kudus 9)
Napoli 6 (Raspadori 18, 47, Di Lorenzo 33, Zielinski 45, Kvaratskhelia 63, Simeone 81)

Oct 12 – Naples
Napoli 4 (Lozano 4, Raspadori 16 Kvaratskhelia 62 pen, Osimhen 89)
Ajax 2 (Klaassen 49, Bergwijn 83 pen)

Oct 12 – Glasgow
Rangers 1 (Arfield 17)
Liverpool 7 (Firmino 24, 55, Nunez 66, Salah 76, 80, 81, Elliott 87)

Oct 26 – Naples
Napoli 3 (Simeone 11, 16, Ostigard 80)
Rangers 0

Oct 26 – Amsterdam
Ajax 0
Liverpool 3 (Salah 42, Nunez 49, Elliott 52)

Nov 1 – Liverpool
Liverpool 2 (Salah 85, Nunez 90+8)
Napoli 0

Nov 1 – Glasgow
Rangers 1 (Tavernier 87 pen)
Ajax 3 (Berghuis 4, Kudus 29, Conceicao 89)

Final Standings

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Napoli (Q)	6	5	0	1	20	6	15
Liverpool (Q)	6	5	0	1	17	6	15
Ajax	6	2	0	4	11	16	6
Rangers	6	0	0	6	2	22	0

Group B

Oct 4 – Porto
Porto 2 (Sanusi 69, Galeno 87)
Bayer Leverkusen 0

Oct 4 – Brugge
Club Brugge 2 (Sowah 36, Jutgla 62)
Atletico Madrid 0

Oct 12 – Madrid
Atletico Madrid 0
Club Brugge 0

Oct 12 – Leverkusen
Bayer Leverkusen 0
Porto 3 (Galeno 6, Taremi 53 pen, 64 pen)

Oct 26 – Brugge
Club Brugge 0
Porto 4 (Taremi 33, 70, Evanilson 57, Eustaquio 60)

Oct 26 – Madrid
Atletico Madrid 2 (Carrasco 22, De Paul 50)
Bayern Leverkusen 2 (Diaby 9, Hudson-Odoi 29)

Nov 1 – Porto
Porto 2 (Taremi 5, Eustaquio 24)
Atletico Madrid 1 (Marcano 90+5 og)

Nov 1 – Leverkusen
Bayern Leverkusen 0
Club Brugge 0

Final Standings

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Porto (Q)	6	4	0	2	12	7	12
Club Brugge (Q)	6	3	2	1	7	4	11
B. Leverkusen	6	1	2	3	4	8	5
Atletico Madrid	6	1	2	3	5	9	5

Group C

Oct 4 – Munich
Bayern Munich 5 (Sane 7, 50, Gnabry 13, Mane 21, Choupo-Moting 59)
Viktoria Plzen 0

Oct 4 – Milan
Internazionale 1 (Calhanoglu 45+2)
Barcelona 0

Oct 12 – Barcelona
Barcelona 3 (Dembele 40, Lewandowski 82, 90+2)
Internazionale 3 (Barella 50, Martinez 63, Gosens 89)

Oct 12 – Plzen
Viktoria Plzen 2 (Vlkanova 62, Kliment 75)
Bayern Munich 4 (Mane 10, Muller 14, Goretzka 25, 35)

Oct 26 – Milan
Internazionale 4 (Mkhitaryan 35, Dzeko 42, 66, Lukaku 87)
Viktoria Plzen 0

Oct 26 – Barcelona
Barcelona 0
Bayern Munich 3 (Mane 10, Choupo-Moting 31, Pavard 90+5)

Nov 1 – Munich
Bayern Munich 2 (Pavard 32, Choupo-Moting 72)
Internazionale 0

Nov 1 – Plzen
Viktoria Plzen 2 (Chory 51 pen, 63)
Barcelona 4 (Alonso 6, Torres 44, 54, Torre 75)

Final Standings

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Bayern (Q)	6	6	0	0	18	2	18
Inter (Q)	6	3	1	2	10	7	10
Barcelona	6	2	1	3	12	12	7
Viktoria Plzen	6	0	0	6	5	24	0

Group D

Oct 4 – Marseille
Marseille 4 (Sanchez 13, Harit 16, Balerdi 28, Mbemba 84)
Sporting 1 (Trincao 1)

Oct 4 – Frankfurt
Eintracht Frankfurt 0
Tottenham Hotspur 0

Oct 12 – London
Tottenham Hotspur 3 (Son Heung-min 19, 36, Kane 28 pen)
Eintracht Frankfurt 2 (Kamada 14, Alidou 87)

Oct 12 – Lisbon
Sporting 0
Marseille 2 (Guendouzi 20 pen, Sanchez 30)

Oct 26 – London
Tottenham Hotspur 1 (Bentancur 80)
Sporting 1 (Edwards 22)

Oct 26 – Frankfurt
E. Frankfurt 2 (Kamada 3, Kolo Muani 27)
Marseille 1 (Guendouzi 22)

Nov 1 – Lisbon
Sporting 1 (Arthur 39)
E. Frankfurt 2 (Kamada 62, Kolo Muani 72)

Nov 1 – Marseille
Marseille 1 (Mbemba 45+2)
Tottenham 2 (Lenglet 54, Hojbjerg 90+5)

Final Standings

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Tottenham (Q)	6	3	2	1	8	6	11
E. Frankfurt (Q)	6	3	1	2	7	8	10
Sporting	6	2	1	2	8	9	7
Marseille	6	2	0	3	8	8	6

Group E

Oct 5 – Salzburg
Red Bull Salzburg 1 (Okafor 71 pen)
Dinamo Zagreb 0

Oct 5 – London
Chelsea 3 (Fofana 24, Aubameyang 56, James 61)
Milan 0

Oct 11 – Zagreb
Dinamo Zagreb 1 (Ljubicic 40)
Red Bull Salzburg 1 (Seiwald 12)

Oct 11 –Milan
Milan 0
Chelsea 2 (Jorginho 21 pen, Aubameyang 34)

Oct 25 – Salzburg
Red Bull Salzburg 1 (Adamu 48)
Chelsea 2 (Kovacic 23, Havertz 64)

Oct 25 – Zagreb
Dinamo Zagreb 0
Milan 4 (Gabbia 39, Leao 49, Giroud 59 pen, Ljubicic 69 og)

Nov 2 – London
Chelsea 2 (Sterling 18, Zakaria 30)
Dinamo Zagreb 1 (Petkovic 7)

Nov 2 – Milan
Milan 4 (Giroud 14, 57, Krunic 46, Messias 90+1)
Red Bull Salzburg 0

Final Standings

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Chelsea (Q)	6	4	1	1	10	4	13
Milan (Q)	6	3	1	2	12	7	10
RB Salzburg	6	1	3	2	5	9	6
Dinamo Zagreb	6	1	1	4	4	11	4

Group F

Oct 5 – Leipzig
RB Leipzig 3 (Nkunku 27, Silva 64, 77)
Celtic 1 (Jota 47)

Oct 5 – Madrid
Real Madrid 2 (Rodrygo 13, Vinicius Jr 28)
Shakhtar Donetsk 1 (Zubkov 39)

Oct 11 – Warsaw
Shakhtar Donetsk 1 (Zubkov 46)
Real Madrid 1 (Rudiger 90+5)

Oct 11 – Glasgow
Celtic 0
RB Leipzig 2 (Werner 75, Forsberg 84)

Oct 25 – Glasgow
Celtic 1 (Giakoumakis 34)
Shakhtar Donetsk 1 (Mudryk 58)

Oct 25 – Leipzig
RB Leipzig 3 (Gvardiol 13, Nkunku 18, Werner 81)
Real Madrid 2 (Vinicius Jr 44, Rodrygo 90+3 pen)

Nov 2 – Madrid
Real Madrid 5 (Modric 6 pen, Rodrygo 21 pen, Asensio 51, Vinicius Jr 61, Valverde 71)
Celtic 1 (Jota 84)

Nov 2 – Warsaw
Shakhtar Donetsk 0
RB Leipzig 4 (Nkunku 10, Silva 50, Szoboszlai 62, Bondar 68 og)

Final Standings

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Real Madrid (Q)	6	4	1	1	15	6	13
RB Leipzig (Q)	6	4	0	2	13	9	12
Shakhtar	6	1	3	2	8	10	6
Celtic	6	0	2	4	4	15	2

Group G

Oct 5 – Manchester
Manchester City 5 (Haaland 7, 32, Khocholava 39 og, Mahrez 55 pen, Alvarez 76)
Copenhagen 0

Oct 5 – Seville
Sevilla 1 (En-Nesyri 51)
Borussia Dortmund 4 (Guerreiro 6, Bellingham 41, Adeyemi 43, Brandt 75)

Oct 11 – Copenhagen
Copenhagen 0
Manchester City 0

Oct 11 – Dortmund
Borussia Dortmund 1 (Bellingham 35)
Sevilla 1 (Nianzou 18)

Oct 25 – Seville
Sevilla 3 (En-Nesyri 61, Isco 88, Montiel 90+2)
Copenhagen 0

Oct 25 – Dortmund
Borussia Dortmund 0
Manchester City 0

Nov 2 – Manchester
Manchester City 3 (Lewis 52, Alvarez 73, Mahrez 83)
Sevilla 1 (Mir 31)

Nov 2 – Copenhagen
Copenhagen 1 (Haraldsson 41)
Borussia Dortmund 1 (Hazard 23)

Final Standings

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Man City (Q)	6	4	2	0	14	2	14
Dortmund (Q)	6	2	3	1	10	5	9
Sevilla	6	1	2	3	6	12	5
Copenhagen	6	0	3	3	1	12	3

Oct 5 – Turin
Juventus 3 (Rabiot 35, 83, Vlahovic 50)
Maccabi Haifa 1 (David 75)

Oct 5 – Lisbon
Benfica 1 (Danilo 41 og)
Paris Saint-Germain 1 (Messi 22)

Oct 11 – Haifa
Maccabi Haifa 2 (Atzili 7, 42)
Juventus 0

Oct 11 – Paris
Paris Saint-Germain 1 (Mbappe 40 pen)
Benfica 1 (Mario 62 pen)

Oct 25 – Paris
Paris Saint-Germain 7 (Messi 19, 44, Mbappe 32, 64, Neymar 35, Goldberg 67 og, Soler 84)
Maccabi Haifa 2 (Seck 38, 50)

Oct 25 – Lisbon
Benfica 4 (A. Silva 17, Mario 28 pen, R. Silva 35, 50)
Juventus 3 (Kean 21, Milik 77, McKennie 79)

Nov 2 – Turin
Juventus 1 (Bonucci 39)
Paris Saint-Germain 2 (Mbappe 13, Mendes 69)

Nov 2 – Haifa
Maccabi Haifa 1 (Chery 26 pen)
Benfica 6 (Ramos 20, Musa 59, Grimaldo 69, R. Silva 73, Araujo 88, Mario 90+2)

Final Standings

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Benfica (Q)	6	4	2	0	16	7	14
PSG (Q)	6	4	2	0	16	7	15
Juventus	6	1	0	5	9	13	3
Maccabi Haifa	6	1	0	5	7	21	3

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Group A

Oct 6 – Zurich
Zurich 1 (Okita 87)
PSV 5 (Vertessen 10, 15, Gakpo 21, 55, Simons 35)

Oct 6 – London
Arsenal 3 (Nketiah 23, Holding 27, Vieira 84)
Bodo/Glimt 0

Oct 13 – Bodo
Bodo/Glimt 0
Arsenal 1 (Saka 24)

Oct 13 – Eindhoven
PSV 5 (Gutierrez 9, Veerman 15, 55, Sangare 34, El Ghazi 84)
Zurich 0

Oct 20 – London
Arsenal 1 (Xhaka 71)
PSV 0

Oct 27 – Zurich
Zurich 2 (Boranijasevic 67, Marchesano 90+4)
Bodo/Glimt 1 (Pellegrino 45+1)

Oct 27 – Eindhoven
PSV 2 (Veerman 55, De Jong 63)
Arsenal 0

Nov 3 – London
Arsenal 1 (Tierney 17)
Zurich 0

Nov 3 – Bodo
Bodo/Glimt 1 (Zugelj 90+3)
PSV 2 (Sampsted 36 og, Bakayoko 52)

Final Standings

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Arsenal (Q)	6	5	0	1	8	3	15
PSV (P)	6	4	1	1	15	4	13
Bodo/Glimt	6	1	1	4	5	10	4
Zurich	6	1	0	5	5	16	3

Group B

Oct 6 – Rennes
Rennes 2 (Terrier 23, D. Doue 89)
Dynamo Kyiv 1 (Tsygankov 33)

Oct 6 – Istanbul
Fenerbahce 2 (Batshuayi 26, Mamas 79 og)
AEK Larnaca 0

Oct 13 – Krakow
Dynamo Kyiv 0
Rennes 1 (Wooh 48)

Oct 13 – Larnaca
AEK Larnaca 1 (Trickovski 52 pen)
Fenerbahce 2 (Joao Pedro 16, Batshuayi 80 pen)

Oct 27 – Istanbul
Fenerbahce 3 (Valencia 42, Zajc 82, Mor 88)
Rennes 3 (Gouiri 5, 30, Terrier 16)

Oct 27 – Larnaca
AEK Larnaca 3 (Altman 26, 72, Lopes 53)
Dynamo Kyiv 3 (Vanat 45, Garmash 82, 90+2)

Nov 3 – Krakow
Dynamo Kyiv 0
Fenerbahce 2 (Guler 23, Arao 45+2)

Nov 3 – Rennes
Rennes 1 (Abline 17)
AEK Larnaca 1 (Lopes 76)

Final Standings

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Fenerbahce (Q)	6	4	2	0	13	7	14
Rennes (P)	6	3	3	0	11	8	12
AEK Larnaca	6	1	2	3	7	10	5
Dynamo Kyiv	6	0	1	5	5	11	1

Group C

Oct 6 – Helsinki
HJK 1 (Hetemaj 55)
Ludogorets 1 (Tissera 10)

Oct 6 – Rome
Roma 1 (Dybala 34 pen)
Real Betis 2 (Rodriguez 40, Luiz Henrique 88)

Oct 13 – Seville
Real Betis 1 (Canales 34)
Roma 1 (Belotti 53)

Oct 13 – Razgrad
Ludogorets 2 (Gropper 38, Rick 64)
HJK 0

Oct 27 – Razgrad
Ludogorets 0
Real Betis 1 (Fekir 56)

Oct 27 – Helsinki
HJK 1 (Hetemaj 54)
Roma 2 (Abraham 41, Hoskonen 62 og)

Nov 3 – Rome
Roma 3 (Pellegrini 56 pen, 65 pen, Zaniolo 85)
Ludogorets 1 (Rick 41)

Nov 3 – Seville
Real Betis 3 (Ruibal 20, 40, Fekir 90+3)
HJK 0

Final Standings

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Real Betis (Q)	6	5	1	0	12	4	16
Roma (P)	6	3	1	2	11	7	10
Ludogorets	6	2	1	3	8	9	7
HJK	6	0	1	5	3	13	1

Group D

Oct 6 – Malmo
Malmo 0
Union Berlin 1 (Becker 68)

Oct 6 – Braga
Braga 1 (Ruiz 49)
Union Saint-Gilloise 2 (Nilsson 86, 90+4)

Oct 13 – Leuven
Union Saint-Gilloise 3 (Boniface 20, 62, Vanzeir 49)
Braga 3 (Vitinha 15, 36, 41)

Oct 13 – Berlin
Union Berlin 1 (Knoche 89 pen)
Malmo 0

Oct 27 – Malmo
Malmo 0
Union Saint-Gilloise 2 (Teuma 10, Amani 41)

Oct 27 – Berlin
Union Berlin 1 (Knoche 68 pen)
Braga 0

Nov 3 – Leuven
Union Saint-Gilloise 0
Union Berlin 1 (Michel 6)

Nov 3 – Braga
Braga 2 (R. Horta 36, Djalo 55)
Malmo 1 (Sejdiu 77)

Final Standings

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Union SG (Q)	6	4	1	1	11	7	13
Union Berlin (P)	6	4	0	2	4	2	12
Braga	6	3	1	2	9	7	10
Malmo	6	0	0	6	3	11	0

Group E

Oct 6 – Chisinau
Sheriff Tiraspol 0
Real Sociedad 2 (Silva 53, Elustondo 62)

Oct 6 – Nicosia
Omonia 2 (Ansarifard 34, Panayiotou 85)
Manchester Utd 3 (Rashford 53, 84, Martial 63)

Oct 13 – Manchester
Manchester United 1 (McTominay 90+3)
Omonia 0

Oct 13 – San Sebastian
Real Sociedad 3 (Sorloth 45+1, Rico 66, Navarro 81)
Sheriff Tiraspol 0

Oct 27 – Manchester
Manchester United 3 (Dalot 44, Rashford 65, Ronaldo 81)
Sheriff Tiraspol 0

Oct 27 – Nicosia
Omonia 0
Real Sociedad 2 (Navarro 45+2, Mendez 60)

Nov 3 – San Sebastian
Real Sociedad 0
Manchester United 1 (Garnacho 17)

Nov 3 – Chisinau
Sheriff Tiraspol 1 (Rasheed 88)
Omonia 0

Final Standings

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
R. Sociedad (Q)	6	5	0	1	10	2	15
Man Utd (P)	6	5	0	1	10	3	15
Sheriff Tiraspol	6	2	0	4	4	10	6
Omonia	6	0	0	6	3	12	0

Group F

Oct 6 – Graz
Sturm Graz 0
Lazio 0

Oct 6 – Herning
Midtjylland 2 (Isaksen 54, Juninho 85)
Feyenoord 2 (Szymanski 23, Kokcu 45 pen)

Oct 13 – Rotterdam
Feyenoord 2 (Timber 32, Hancko 48)
Midtjylland 2 (Martinez 16, Sviatchenko 58)

Oct 13 – Rome
Lazio 2 (Immobile 45 pen, Pedro 71)
Sturm Graz 2 (Boving 56, 83)

Oct 27 – Rome
Lazio 2 (Milinkovic-Savic 36, Pedro 58)
Midtjylland 1 (Isaksen 8)

Oct 27 – Graz
Sturm Graz 1 (Kiteishvili 90+3)
Feyenoord 0

Nov 3 – Herning
Midtjylland 2 (Dreyer 15, 72)
Sturm Graz 0

Nov 3 – Rotterdam
Feyenoord 1 (Gimenez 64)
Lazio 0

Final Standings

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Feyenoord (Q)	6	2	2	2	13	9	8
Midtjylland (P)	6	2	2	2	12	8	8
Lazio	6	2	2	2	9	11	8
Sturm Graz	6	2	2	2	4	10	8

Group G

Oct 6 – Piraeus
Olympiakos 0
Qarabag 3 (Owusu 68, Vesovic 82, Seydayev 86)

Oct 6 – Freiburg
Freiburg 2 (Kyereh 48, Grifo 72)
Nantes 0

Oct 13 – Nantes
Nantes 0
Freiburg 4 (Kubler 26, Gregoritsch 71, Schade 82, Jeong Woo-yeong 87)

Oct 13 – Baku
Qarabag 0
Olympiakos 0

Oct 27 – Freiburg
Freiburg 1 (Kubler 90+3)
Olympiakos 1 (El-Arabi 17)

Oct 27 – Nantes
Nantes 2 (Blas 16, Ganago 90+5)
Qarabag 1 (Ozobic 56 pen)

Nov 3 – Baku
Qarabag 1 (Owusu 90+2)
Freiburg 1 (Petersen 25 pen)

Nov 3 – Piraeus
Olympiakos 0
Nantes 2 (Mohamed 79, Blas 90)

Final Standings

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Freiburg (Q)	6	4	2	0	13	3	14
Nantes (P)	6	3	0	3	6	11	9
Qarabag	6	2	2	2	9	5	8
Olympiakos	6	0	2	4	2	11	2

Group H

Oct 6 – Belgrade
Red Star Belgrade 4 (Kanga 27 pen, 60, Mitrovic 35, Katai 50)
Ferencvaros 1 (Zachariassen 71)

Oct 6 – Monaco
Monaco 3 (Ben Yedder 14, 45+2 pen, Disasi 55)
Trabzonspor 1 (Bakasetas 72)

Oct 13 – Trabzon
Trabzonspor 4 (Sarr 44 og, Vitor Hugo 48, Bardhi 57, Trezeguet 69)
Monaco 0

Oct 13 – Budapest
Ferencvaros 2 (Zachariassen 23, S. Mmaee 61)
Red Star Belgrade 1 (Mitrovic 55)

Oct 27 – Belgrade
Red Star Belgrade 2 (Katai 37, Pesic 64)
Trabzonspor 1 (Bakasetas 39)

Oct 27 – Budapest
Ferencvaros 1 (Zachariassen 81)
Monaco 1 (Ben Yedder 31)

Nov 3 – Trabzon
Trabzonspor 1 (Bakasetas 7)
Ferencvaros 0

Nov 3 – Monaco
Monaco 4 (Volland 5, 27, 87, Rodic 50 og)
Red Star Belgrade 1 (Kanga 54 pen)

Final Standings

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Ferencvaros (Q)	6	3	1	2	8	9	10
Monaco (P)	6	3	1	2	9	8	10
Trabzonspor	6	3	0	3	11	9	9
Red Star Belgrade	6	2	0	4	9	11	6

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Group A

Oct 6 – Edinburgh
Hearts 0
Fiorentina 3 (Mandragora 4, Kouame 42, Jovic 79)

Oct 6 – Riga
RFS 0
Istanbul Basaksehir 0

Oct 13 – Istanbul
Istanbul Basaksehir 3 (Turuc 11, Okaka 45, 72)
RFS 0

Oct 13 – Florence
Fiorentina 5 (Jovic 6, Biraghi 22, Gonzalez 32, 79 pen, Barak 38)
Hearts 1 (Humphrys 47)

Oct 27 – Florence
Fiorentina 2 (Jovic 26, 61)
Istanbul Basaksehir 1 (Aleksic 14)

Oct 27 – Edinburgh
Hearts 2 (Shankland 3, Halliday 12)
RFS 1 (Friesenbichler 39)

Nov 3 – Riga
RFS 0
Fiorentina 3 (Barak 7, Cabral 44, Saponara 45+2)

Nov 3 – Istanbul
Istanbul Basaksehir 3 (Ndayishimiye 4, Gurler 33, Ozcan 64)
Hearts 1 (Atkinson 90)

Final Standings

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
I. Basaksehir (Q)	6	4	1	1	14	3	13
Fiorentina (P)	6	4	1	1	14	6	13
Hearts	6	2	0	4	6	16	6
RFS	6	0	2	4	2	11	2

Group B

Oct 6 – Brussels
Anderlecht 0
West Ham United 1 (Scamacca 79)

Oct 6 – Silkeborg
Silkeborg 5 (Klynge 3, Kusk 7, Helenius 35 pen, Thordarson 58, Adamsen 71)
FCSB 0

Oct 13 – Bucharest
FCSB 0
Silkeborg 5 (Kusk 12, Klynge 16, Tengstedt 63, Jorgensen 68, 70)

Oct 13 – London
West Ham United 2 (Benrahma 14, Bowen 30)
Anderlecht 1 (Esposito 89 pen)

Oct 27 – Brussels
Anderlecht 2 (Verschaeren 38, Vertonghen 75)
FCSB 2 (Compagno 60, Dawa 82)

Oct 27 – London
West Ham United 1 (Lanzini 24 pen)
Silkeborg 0

Nov 3 – Bucharest
FCSB 0
West Ham United 3 (Fornals 40, 65, Dawa 56 og)

Nov 3 – Silkeborg
Silkeborg 0
Anderlecht 2 (Refaelov 20, Raman 90+4)

Final Standings

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
West Ham (Q)	6	6	0	0	13	4	18
Anderlecht (P)	6	2	2	2	6	5	8
Silkeborg	6	2	0	4	12	7	6
FCSB	6	0	2	4	3	18	2

Group C

Oct 6 – Poznan
Lech Poznan 0
Hapoel Be'er Sheva 0

Oct 6 – Valencia
Villarreal 5 (Baena 18, Danjuma 43, Morales 76, 80, 88)
Austria Vienna 0

Oct 13 – Vienna
Austria Vienna 0
Villarreal 1 (Jackson 87)

Oct 13 – Be'er Sheva
Hapoel Be'er Sheva 1 (Hemed 9 pen)
Lech Poznan 1 (Szymczak 44)

Oct 27 – Valencia
Villarreal 2 (Chukwueze 57, Danjuma 70)
Hapoel Be'er Sheva 2 (Hemed 48 pen, Yehezkel 79)

Oct 27 – Vienna
Austria Vienna 1 (Keles 69)
Lech Poznan 1 (Ishak 48)

Nov 3 – Poznan
Lech Poznan 3 (Velde 27, Skoras 51, 77)
Villarreal 0

Nov 3 – Be'er Sheva
Hapoel Be'er Sheva 4 (Jehezkel 29, Safour 33, Shechter 63, Handl 73 og)
Austria Vienna 0

Final Standings

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Villarreal (Q)	6	4	1	1	14	9	13
Lech Poznan (P)	6	2	3	1	12	7	9
H. Be'er Sheva	6	1	4	1	8	5	7
Austria Vienna	6	0	2	4	2	15	2

Group D

Oct 6 – Uherske Hradiste
Slovacko 0
Nice 1 (Pepe 54)

Oct 6 – Cologne
Cologne 0
Partizan Belgrade 1 (Markovic 9)

Oct 13 – Belgrade
Partizan Belgrade 2 (Diabate 15, Gomes 52)
Cologne 0

Oct 13 – Nice
Nice 1 (Diop 14)
Slovacko 2 (Tomic 75, Reinberk 86)

Oct 27 – Uherske Hradiste
Slovacko 0
Cologne 1 (Duda 82 pen)

Oct 27 – Nice
Nice 2 (Pepe 29, Lemina 77)
Partizan Belgrade 1 (Gomes 74)

Nov 3 – Belgrade
Partizan Belgrade 1 (Natcho 41 pen)
Slovacko 1 (Mihalik 73)

Nov 3 – Cologne
Cologne 2 (Huseinbasic 48, Duda 60)
Nice 2 (Laborde 40, Brahimi 43)

Final Standings

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Nice (Q)	6	2	3	1	8	7	9
Partizan (P)	6	2	3	1	9	7	9
Cologne	6	2	2	2	8	8	8
Slovacko	6	1	2	3	8	11	5

Group E

Oct 6 – Kosice
Dnipro-1 2 (Dovbyk 5, Pikhalyonok 78)
Vaduz 2 (Fehr 26, Gasser 47)

Oct 6 – Alkmaar
AZ 3 (Odgaard 16, D. de Wit 62 pen, Karlsson 85)
Apollon Limassol 2 (Joosten 19, Cabral 71)

Oct 13 – Nicosia
Apollon Limassol 1 (Roberge 32)
AZ 0

Oct 13 – Vaduz
Vaduz 1 (Rastoder 30)
Dnipro-1 2 (Hamache 25, Dovbyk 90+1)

Oct 27 – Vaduz
Vaduz 1 (Hasler 77)
AZ 2 (Kerkez 50, Van Brederode 75)

Oct 27 – Kosice
Dnipro-1 1 (Pikhalyonok 39)
Apollon Limassol 0

Nov 3 – Nicosia
Apollon Limassol 1 (Roberge 32)
Vaduz 0

Nov 3 – Alkmaar
AZ 2 (Odgaard 8, Pavlidis 87)
Dnipro-1 1 (Dovbyk 40)

Final Standings

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
AZ (Q)	6	5	0	1	12	6	15
Dnipro-1 (P)	6	3	1	2	9	7	10
Apollon	6	2	1	3	5	7	7
Vaduz	6	0	2	4	5	11	2

Group F

Oct 6 – Molde
Molde 3 (Brynhildsen 10, 49, Hussain 58)
Shamrock Rovers 0

Oct 6 – Gent
Gent 0
Djurgardens 1 (Danielson 37)

Oct 13 – Stockholm
Djurgardens 4 (Holmberg 21, Wikheim 42, 46, Banda 45+4)
Gent 2 (Depoitre 61, Cuypers 73)

Oct 13 – Dublin
Shamrock Rovers 0
Molde 2 (Fofana 33, Eriksen 69)

Oct 27 – Molde
Molde 2 (Brynhildsen 5, Kaasa 21)
Djurgardens 3 (Edvardsen 44, Asoro 67, Radetinac 76)

Oct 27 – Dublin
Shamrock Rovers 1 (Gaffney 3)
Gent 1 (Hong 74)

Nov 3 – Stockholm
Djurgardens 1 (Eriksson 19)
Shamrock Rovers 0

Nov 3 – Gent
Gent 4 (Hjulsager 52, Godeau 62, Kums 80, Cuypers 89 pen)
Molde 0

Final Standings

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Djurgardens (Q)	6	5	1	0	12	6	16
Gent (P)	6	2	2	2	10	6	8
Molde	6	2	1	3	9	10	7
Shamrock	6	0	2	4	1	10	2

Group G

Oct 6 – Sivas
Sivasspor 3 (Ulvestad 1, Yesilyurt 75, Yatabare 90+1)
Ballkani 4 (Ar. Thaqi 20, Potoku 31, Korenica 66, Krasniqi 90+4)

Oct 6 – Prague
Slavia Prague 0
CFR Cluj 1 (Janga 45)

Oct 13 – Cluj
CFR Cluj 2 (Deac 11 pen, Matias 84)
Slavia Prague 0

Oct 13 – Prishtina
Ballkani 1 (Ar. Thaqi 36)
Sivasspor 2 (Arslan 72, Angielski 81)

Oct 27 – Prishtina
Ballkani 0
Slavia Prague 1 (Lingr 75)

Oct 27 – Sivas
Sivasspor 3 (Yatabare 22, 73, Janga 64 og)
CFR Cluj 0

Nov 3 – Prague
Slavia Prague 1 (Goutas 65 og)
Sivasspor 1 (Gradel 28 pen)

Nov 3 – Cluj
CFR Cluj 1 (Adjei-Boateng 17)
Ballkani 0

Final Standings

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Sivasspor (Q)	6	3	2	1	11	7	11
CFR Cluj (P)	6	3	1	2	5	5	10
Slavia Prague	6	2	2	2	6	7	8
Ballkani	6	1	1	4	8	11	4

Group H

Oct 6 – Yerevan
Pyunik 2 (Juninho 43, Otubanjo 61)
Zalgiris 0

Oct 6 – Basel
Basel 0
Slovan Bratislava 2 (Pauschek 35, Cavric 45+1)

Oct 13 – Bratislava
Slovan Bratislava 3 (Weiss 45+2 pen, Kucka 49, Cavric 53)
Basel 3 (Males 29 pen, Diouf 65, Zeqiri 72)

Oct 13 – Vilnius
Zalgiris 2 (Ourega 23, Oliveira 42)
Pyunik 1 (Ozbiliz 78 pen)

Oct 27 – Basel
Basel 2 (Diouf 1, Zeqiri 17)
Zalgiris 2 (Oyewusi 42, 62)

Oct 27 – Bratislava
Slovan Bratislava 2 (Kashia 84, Ramirez 85)
Pyunik 1 (Cociuc 64 pen)

Nov 3 – Vilnius
Zalgiris 1 (Kyeremeh 47)
Slovan Bratislava 2 (Cavric 15, 23)

Nov 3 – Yerevan
Pyunik 1 (Juricic 71)
Basel 2 (Males 17, Kade 29)

Final Standings

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
S. Bratislava (Q)	6	3	2	1	9	7	11
Basel (P)	6	3	2	1	11	9	11
Pyunik	6	2	0	4	8	9	6
Zalgiris	6	1	2	3	5	8	5

ASIA

JAPAN

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Yokohama F. Marinos (C)	34	20	8	6	70	35	68
Kawasaki Frontale	34	20	6	8	65	42	66
Sanfrecce Hiroshima	34	15	10	9	52	41	55
Kashima Antlers	34	13	13	8	47	42	52
Cerezo Osaka	34	13	12	9	46	40	51
FC Tokyo	34	14	7	13	46	43	49
Kashiwa Reysol	34	13	8	13	43	44	47
Nagoya Grampus	34	11	13	10	30	35	46
Urawa Reds	34	10	15	9	48	39	45
H. Consadole Sapporo	34	11	12	11	45	55	45
Sagan Tosu	34	9	15	10	45	44	42
Shonan Bellmare	34	10	11	13	31	39	41
Vissel Kobe	34	11	7	16	35	41	40
Avispa Fukuoka	34	9	11	14	29	38	38
Gamba Osaka	34	9	10	15	33	44	37
Kyoto Sanga*	34	8	12	14	30	38	36
Shimizu S-Pulse (R)	34	7	12	15	44	54	33
Jubilo Iwata (R)	34	6	12	16	32	57	30

*Enter the relegation play-off

JORDAN

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Al Faisaly (C)	22	15	6	1	46	12	51
Al Wehdat	22	15	5	2	33	11	50
Al Hussein	22	15	5	2	35	14	50
Shabab Al Ordon	22	10	3	9	32	29	33
Shabab Al Aqaba	22	8	7	7	19	24	31
Al Ramtha	22	7	5	10	27	25	26
Ma'an	22	7	4	11	24	42	25
Al Salt	22	6	6	10	22	30	24
Sahab	22	5	9	8	18	23	24
Moghayer Al Sarhan	22	4	7	11	18	30	19
Al Sareeh (R)	22	5	2	15	20	34	17
Al Jazeera (R)	22	3	5	14	18	38	14

MALAYSIA

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Johor Darul Ta'zim (C)	22	17	5	0	61	12	56
Terengganu	22	14	2	6	39	20	44
Sabah	22	13	3	6	36	26	42
Negeri Sembilan	22	12	5	5	33	26	41
Selangor	22	8	6	8	39	33	30
Kuala Lumpur City	22	8	5	9	30	31	29
Sri Pahang	22	8	4	10	33	31	28
Kedah	22	8	3	11	32	41	27
Petaling Jaya City	22	6	8	8	22	30	26
Melaka United*	22	4	6	12	22	43	18
Sarawak United*	22	5	2	15	19	50	17
Pulau Pinang	22	2	5	15	22	45	11

*Melaka United and Sarawak United demoted

SINGAPORE

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Albirex Niigata S (C)	28	17	8	3	88	43	59
Lion City Sailors	28	18	3	7	91	39	57
Tampines Rovers	28	15	5	8	76	57	50
Geylang International	28	10	9	9	48	46	39
Hougang United	28	10	9	9	65	71	39
Tanjong Pagar	28	10	7	11	59	69	37
Balestier Khalsa	28	7	3	18	45	78	24
Young Lions	28	2	2	24	34	103	8

SOUTH KOREA

Championship Round

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Ulsan Hyundai (C)	38	22	10	6	57	33	76
Jeonbuk Hyundai Motors	38	21	10	7	56	36	73
Pohang Steelers	38	16	12	10	52	41	60
Incheon United	38	13	15	10	46	42	54
Jeju United	38	14	10	14	52	50	52
Gangwon FC	38	14	7	17	50	52	49

Relegation Round

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Suwon FC	38	13	9	16	56	63	48
Daegu FC	38	10	16	12	52	59	46
FC Seoul	38	11	13	14	43	47	46
Suwon Bluewings*	38	11	11	16	44	49	44
Gimcheon Sangmu** (R)	38	8	14	16	45	48	38
Seongnam FC (R)	38	7	9	22	37	70	30

*Won their relegation play-off
**Lost their relegation play-off

2022 AFC CUP

West Asia Zone Final

Oct 4: Al Seeb 4-0 Al Riffa

Inter-Zone Final

Oct 5: Sogdiana Jizzakh 0-0p Kuala Lumpur City

Final

Oct 22: Kuala Lumpur City 0-3 Al Seeb

AFRICA

2022-23 CAF CHAMPIONS LEAGUE

First Qualifying Round

Sep 10-18: Rivers United 3-0 Watanga; AS Stade Mandji 2-2 Plateau United; ASN Nigelec 2-1 SOA Renaissante; APR 1-0 US Monastir; Olympic Real de Bangui 0-3 Vipers; Volcan Club 1-0 La Passe; Coton Sport Benin 1-2 ASEC Abidjan; ASKO Kara 1-1 FC Nouadhibou; Casa Sports 1-0 JS Kabylie; Deportivo Mongomo 2-0 Djoliba; Bo Rangers 0-0 CR Belouizdad; Zalan 0-4 Young Africans; Saint George 2-1 Al Hilal Omdurman; Arta Solar 1-2 Al Merrikh; KMKM 0-2 Al Ahli Tripoli; Flambeau du Centre 1-0 Al Ittihad Tripoli; Elect Sport 0-2 Zamalek; Cape Town City 2-0 AS Otoho; Black Bulls 0-3 Petro de Luanda; Red Arrow 0-1 1º de Agosto; Nyasa Big Bullets 0-2 Simba; CFFA 2-3 Royal Leopards; Matlama 0-3 Coton Sport; Rail Club du Kadiogo 0-1 Asante Kotoko; Gaborone United 1-0 AS Vita Club
Sep 16-25: Watanga 1-0 Rivers United (agg 1-3); Plateau United 1-0 AS Stade Mandji (agg 3-2); SOA Renaissante 0-0 ASN Nigelec (agg 1-2); US Monastir 3-0 APR (agg 3-1); Vipers 1-0 Olympic Real de Bangui (agg 4-0); La Passe (bye) cancelled Volcan Club (withdrew); ASEC Abidjan 2-0 Coton Sport Benin (agg 4-1); FC Nouadhibou 0-1 ASKO Kara (agg 1-2); JS Kabylie 3-0 Casa Sports (agg 3-1); Djoliba 5-0 Deportivo Mongomo (agg 5-2); CR Belouizdad 3-0 Bo Rangers (agg 3-0); Young Africans 5-0 Zalan (agg 9-0); Al Hilal Omdurman a1-0 Saint George (agg 2-2); Al Merrikh 0-0 Arta Solar (agg 2-1); Al Ahli Tripoli 4-0 KMKM (agg 6-0); Al Ittihad Tripoli 2-1a Flambeau du Centre (agg 2-2); Zamalek 2-0 Elect Sport (agg 4-0); AS Otoho 0-0 Cape Town City (agg 0-2); Petro de Luanda 2-1 Black Bulls (agg 5-1); 1º de Agosto 1-1 Red Arrows (agg 2-1); Simba 2-0 Nyasa Big Bullets (agg 4-0); Royal Leopards 2-1 CFFA (agg 5-3); Coton Sport 1-0 Matlama (agg 4-0); Asante Kotoko 0-1p Rail Club du Kadiogo (agg 1-1); AS Vita Club 3-1 Gaborone United (agg 3-2)

Second Qualifying Round

Oct 8-16: Rivers United 2-1 Wydad; Plateau United 2-1 Esperance; ASN Nigelec 0-2 Raja;

US Monastir 0-1 Al Ahly; Vipers 0-0 TP Mazembe; La Passe 0-7 Mamelodi Sundowns; ASEC Abidjan 0-1 Horoya; ASKO Kara 1-2 JS Kabylie; Djoliba 2-1 CR Belouizdad; Young Africans 1-1 Al Hilal Omdurman; Al Merrikh 2-0 Al Ahli Tripoli; Flambeau du Centre 0-1 Zamalek; Cape Town City 0-3 Petro de Luanda; 1º de Agosto 1-3 Simba; Royal Leopards 1-1 Coton Sport; Rail Club du Kadiogo 0-0 AS Vita Club
Oct 15-20: Wydad 6-0 Rivers United (agg 7-1); Esperance a1-0 Plateau United (agg 2-2); Raja 1-0 ASN Nigelec (agg 3-0); Al Ahly 3-0 US Monastir (agg 4-0); TP Mazembe 0-0p Vipers (agg 0-0); Mamelodi Sundowns 8-1 La Passe (agg 15-1); Horoya 1-1 ASEC Abidjan (agg 2-1); JS Kabylie 1-1 ASKO Kara (agg 3-2); CR Belouizdad 2-0 Djoliba (agg 3-2); Al Hilal Omdurman 1-0 Young Africans (agg 2-1); Al Ahli Tripoli 3-1a Al Merrikh (agg 3-3); Zamalek 5-1 Flambeau du Centre (agg 6-1); Petro de Luanda 1-0 Cape Town City (agg 4-0); Simba 1-0 1º de Agosto (agg 4-1); Coton Sport 2-1 Royal Leopards (agg 3-2); AS Vita Club p0-0 Rail Club du Kadiogo (agg 0-0)

CONCACAF

CANADA

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Atletico Ottawa*	28	13	10	5	36	29	49
Forge*	28	14	5	9	47	25	47
Cavalry*	28	14	5	9	39	33	47
Pacific*	28	13	7	8	36	33	46
Valour	28	10	7	11	36	34	37
York United	28	9	7	12	31	37	34
HFX Wanderers	28	8	5	15	24	38	29
Edmonton	28	4	8	16	31	51	20

Qualify for the play-offs

Play-Offs

Semi-Finals

Oct 15: Pacific 0-2 Atletico Ottawa; Cavalry 1-1 Forge
Oct 23: Atletico Ottawa 1-1 Pacific (agg 3-1); Forge 2-1 Cavalry (agg 3-2)

Final

Oct 30: Atletico Ottawa 0-2 Forge

DOMINICAN REPUBLIC

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Atletico Pantoja*	10	7	1	2	20	12	22
Moca*	10	3	6	1	11	8	15
Cibao*	10	3	5	2	14	14	14
Vega Real*	10	4	2	4	11	14	14
Universidad O&M	10	3	3	4	13	11	12
Jarabacoa	10	0	3	7	7	17	3

Qualify for the final stage

Final Stage

Semi-Finals

Sep 17-18: Vega Real 1-4 Atletico Pantoja; Cibao 1-0 Moca
Oct 1-2: Atletico Pantoja 4-1 Vega Real (agg 8-2); Moca 1-1 Cibao (agg 1-2)

Final

Oct 8: Cibao 2-1 Atletico Pantoja
Oct 15: Atletico Pantoja 1-1 Cibao (agg 2-3)

MEXICO

2022 Apertura

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
America*	17	12	2	3	38	17	38
Monterrey*	17	10	5	2	29	13	35
Santos Laguna*	17	10	3	4	38	21	33
Pachuca*	17	9	5	3	28	15	32
Tigres UANL**	17	9	3	5	24	14	30
Toluca**	17	7	6	4	27	23	27
Cruz Azul**	17	7	3	7	26	34	24
Puebla**	17	4	10	3	25	23	22
Guadalajara**	17	5	7	5	19	17	22
Leon**	17	6	4	7	25	29	22
Juarez**	17	4	7	6	17	18	19
Necaxa**	17	5	4	8	19	26	19
Atletico San Luis	17	4	6	7	15	23	18
Mazatlan	17	3	8	6	17	24	17
Tijuana	17	4	5	8	18	30	17
Pumas UNAM	17	2	8	7	21	31	14
Atlas	17	3	4	10	16	27	13
Queretaro	17	1	6	10	18	35	9

Qualify for the Championship Stage quarter-finals
Qualify for the Reclassification

2022 Championship Stage

Reclassification

Oct 8-9: Tigres UANL 2-0 Necaxa; Cruz Azul 1-0 Leon; Toluca 3-0 Juarez; Puebla p1-1 Guadalajara

Quarter-Finals

Oct 12-13: Puebla 1-6 America; Cruz Azul 0-0 Monterrey; Toluca 4-3 Santos Laguna; Tigres UANL 1-0 Pachuca
Oct 15-16: America 5-1 Puebla (agg 11-2); Santos Laguna 1-2 Toluca (agg 4-6); Monterrey 3-0 Cruz Azul (agg 3-0); Pachuca 2-1 Tigres UANL

Semi-Finals

Oct 19-20: Toluca 2-1 America; Pachuca 5-2 Monterrey
Oct 22-23: America 1-1 Toluca (agg 2-3); Monterrey 0-1 Pachuca (agg 2-6)

Final

Oct 27: Toluca 1-5 Pachuca
Oct 27: Pachuca 3-1 Toluca (agg 8-2)

UNITED STATES

Eastern Conference

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Philadelphia Union*	34	19	10	5	72	26	67
CF Montreal**	34	20	5	9	63	50	65
New York City FC**	34	16	7	11	57	41	55
New York Red Bulls**	34	15	8	11	50	41	53
FC Cincinnati**	34	12	13	9	64	56	49
Inter Miami**	34	14	6	14	47	56	48
Orlando City**	34	14	6	14	44	53	48
Columbus Crew	34	10	16	8	46	41	46
Charlotte FC	34	13	3	18	44	52	42
New England Revolution	34	10	12	12	47	50	42
Atlanta United	34	10	10	14	48	54	40
Chicago Fire	34	10	9	15	39	48	39
Toronto FC	34	9	7	18	49	66	34
D.C. United	34	7	6	21	36	71	27

Qualify for the MLS Play-Offs semi-finals
**Qualify for the MLS Play-Offs first round*

Western Conference

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
LAFC*	34	21	4	9	66	38	67
Austin FC**	34	16	8	10	65	49	56
FC Dallas**	34	14	11	9	48	37	53
LA Galaxy**	34	14	8	12	58	51	50
Nashville SC**	34	13	11	10	52	41	50
Minnesota United**	34	14	6	14	48	51	48
Real Salt Lake**	34	12	11	11	43	45	47
Portland Timbers	34	11	13	10	53	53	46
Vancouver Whitecaps	34	12	7	15	40	57	43
Colorado Rapids	34	11	10	13	46	57	43
Seattle Sounders	34	12	5	17	47	46	41
Sporting Kansas City	34	11	7	16	42	54	40
Houston Dynamo	34	10	6	18	43	56	36
San Jose Earthquakes	34	8	11	15	52	69	35

Win Supporters' Shield after topping the overall table and qualify for the MLS Play-Off semi-finals
**Qualify for the MLS Play-Offs first round*

2022 MLS Play-Offs

First Round – Eastern Conference

Oct 15-17: New York Red Bulls 1-2 FC Cincinnati; CF Montreal 2-0 Orlando City; New York City FC 3-0 Inter Miami

First Round – Western Conference

Oct 15-17: LA Galaxy 1-0 Nashville SC; Austin FC p2-2 Real Salt Lake (AET); FC Dallas p1-1 Minnesota United (AET)

Semi-Finals – Eastern Conference

Oct 20-23: Philadelphia Union 1-0 FC Cincinnati; CF Montreal 1-3 New York City FC

Semi-Finals – Western Conference

Oct 20-23: LAFC 3-2 LA Galaxy; Austin FC 2-1 FC Dallas

Final – Eastern Conference

Oct 30: Philadelphia Union 3-1 New York City FC

Final – Western Conference

Oct 30: LAFC 3-0 Austin FC

MLS Cup 2022

Nov 5: LAFC p3-3 Philadelphia Union (AET)

2022 CONCACAF LEAGUE

Semi-Finals – 1st Leg

Oct 4-5: Motagua 0-0 Olimpia; Real Espana 0-3 Alajualense
Oct 11: Olimpia 1-0 Motagua (agg 1-0); Alajualense 2-2 Real Espana (agg 5-2)

Final

Oct 26: Olimpia 3-2 Alajualense
Nov 2: Alajualense 2-2 Olimpia (agg 4-5)

SOUTH AMERICA

2022 COPA LIBERTADORES

Final

Oct 29 – Guayaquil
Flamengo 1 (Gabriel Barbosa 45+4)
Athletico Paranaense 0

2022 COPA SUDAMERICANA

Final

Oct 1 – Cordoba
Sao Paulo 0
Independiente del Valle 2 (Diaz 13, Faravelli 67)

ARGENTINA

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Boca Juniors (C)	27	16	4	7	34	28	52
Racing Club	27	14	8	5	41	24	50
River Plate	27	14	5	8	43	22	47
Huracan	27	12	11	4	35	21	47
Atletico Tucuman	27	12	10	5	32	22	46
San Lorenzo	27	10	13	4	33	23	43
Tigre	27	11	10	6	41	32	43
Argentinos Juniors	27	12	6	9	33	24	42
Gimnasia La Plata	27	11	8	8	26	18	41
Patronato	27	11	7	9	31	27	40
Newell's Old Boys	27	11	7	9	26	22	40
Defensa y Justicia	27	10	10	7	29	27	40
Talleres	27	9	8	10	28	26	35
Independiente	27	9	8	10	31	31	35
Godoy Cruz	27	9	8	10	25	29	35
Central Cordoba	27	10	4	13	34	37	34
Barracas Central	27	8	10	9	31	37	34
Estudiantes	27	9	6	12	28	40	33
Platense	27	7	11	9	23	25	32
Rosario Central	27	7	11	9	24	28	32
Sarmiento	27	8	8	11	27	32	32
Union	27	8	8	11	28	36	32
Arsenal	27	6	12	9	28	29	30
Banfield	27	7	9	11	23	29	30
Colon	27	7	8	12	24	36	29
Velez Sarsfield	27	6	10	11	30	33	28
Lanus	27	5	6	16	22	40	21
Aldosivi	27	4	4	19	16	48	16

OCEANIA

FIJI

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Rewa (C)	18	9	8	1	26	14	35
Suva	18	10	5	3	31	20	35
Lautoka	18	9	5	4	38	25	32
Nadi	18	9	5	4	30	20	32
Ba	18	9	2	7	36	28	29
Labasa	18	6	4	8	23	27	22
Nadroga	18	6	3	9	20	31	21
Navua	18	4	6	8	19	31	18
Tailevu Naitasiri (R)	18	3	5	10	20	26	14
Nasinu (R)	18	2	3	13	13	34	9

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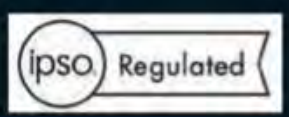

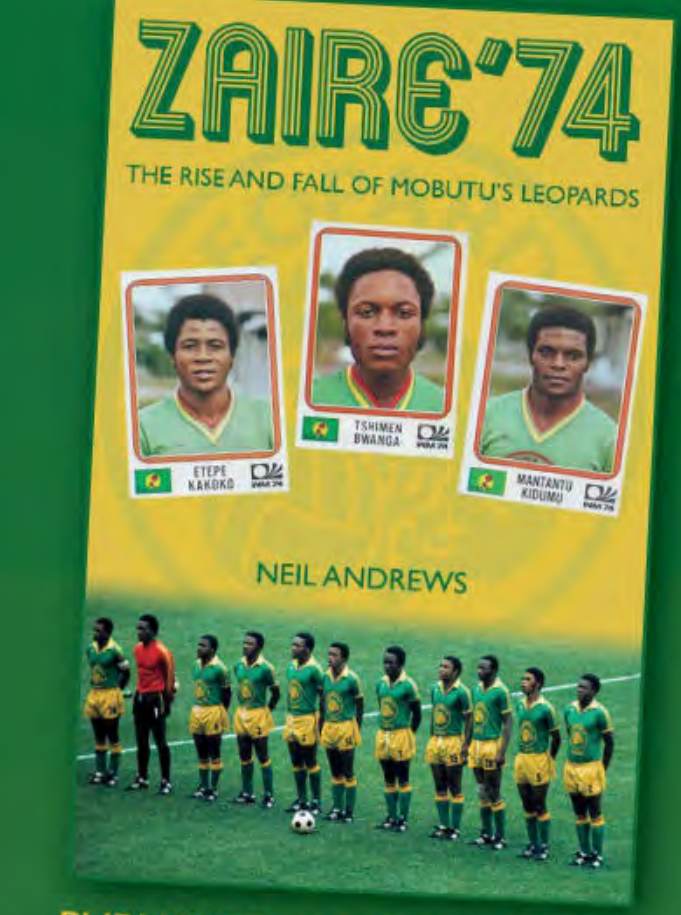

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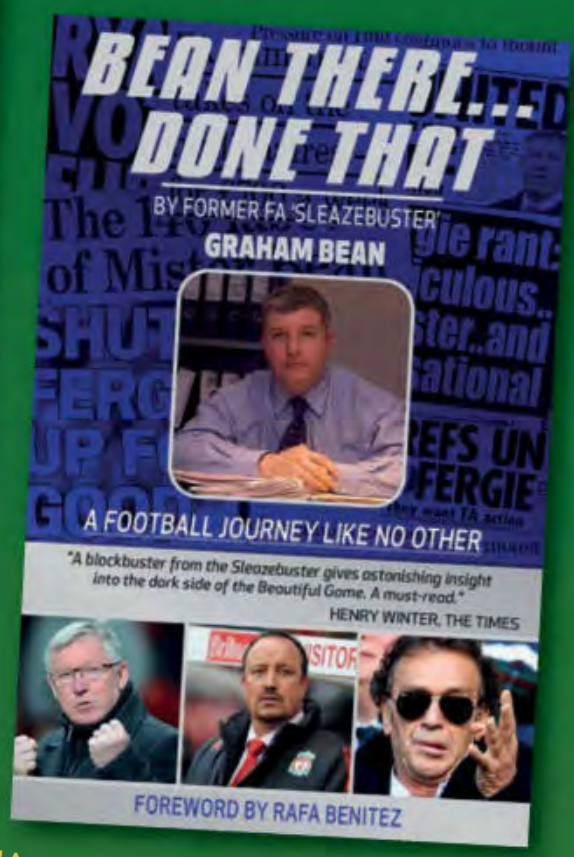

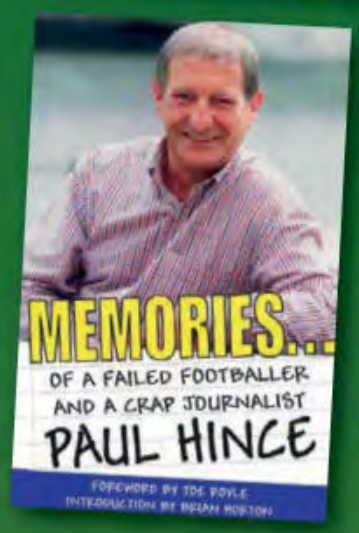

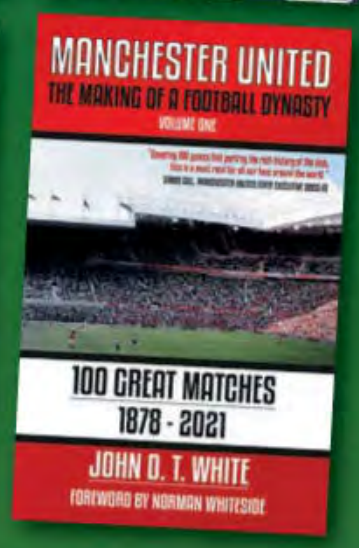

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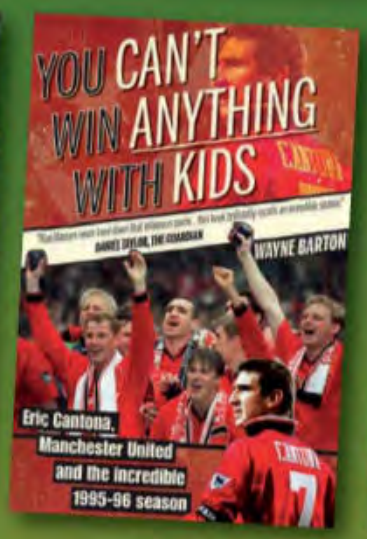

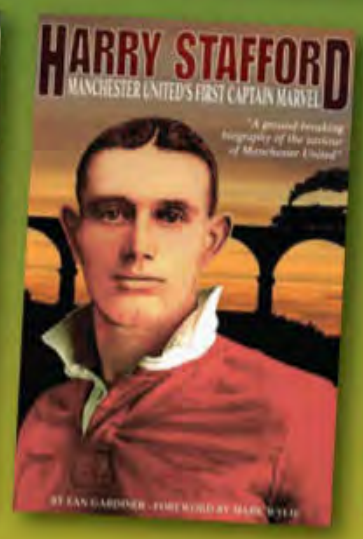

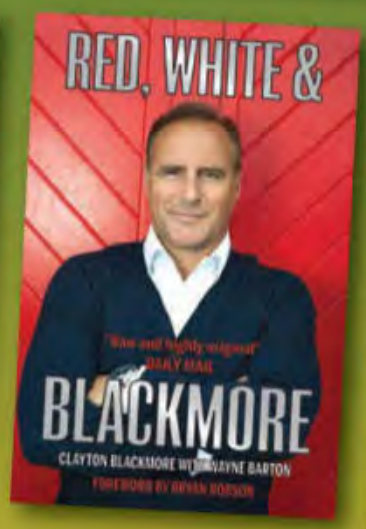

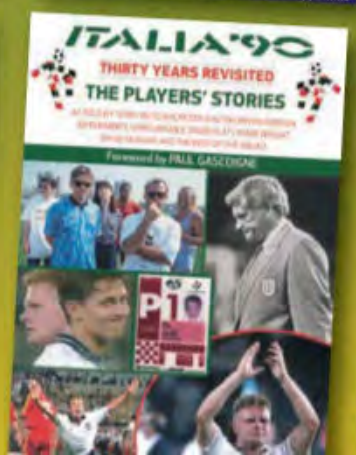

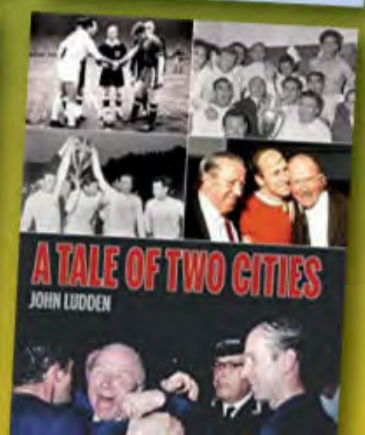

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